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Pam

A Novel

By

Baroness von Hutten

Author of

Marr'd in Making," " Our Lady of the Beeches,

" Violett," &c.

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To you, dear Aunt Susan,
I dedicate this Book
As an inadequate token of my admiration
and love for you

B. v. H.

PART I

CHAPTER I

To the last day of his life the scent of heliotrope recalled to Christopher Cazalet's mind a vivid picture of the dusty white road, the rough wall to his right as he climbed, the brilliance of the southern skies, the glare of the sun that afternoon.

Long before he caught sight of the flower's royal colour against the sky, the hot waves of drowsy odour came over the wall to him and seemed to mingle inextricably with the tangle of thoughts in his excited brain.

A girl running down the hill with a great basket of sun-dried linen balanced on her head, smiled as she passed the little old man, but he paid no heed, for he did not see her.

Joy at his daring in coming, pride in his success in finding the place, fear of being badly received, a childlike, godlike love of the beauty of the day and the view behind, to which he turned every few minutes, and a sensuous delight in the hot sweetness that seemed to be in some unexplained way the essence of the whole story—these things, woven and interwoven in his mind, were never to be forgotten. And then, at a turn in the road, clustering about the tops of the great carved posts at the sides of a gilt-iron gateway, great tufts of dark purple heliotrope hung in the sunlight. In his ecstasy, Cazalet took off his hat and stood looking up, a grotesque enough little figure in his old-fashioned black coat, his large feet widely turned out, his bald head gleaming. "Heliotrope!" he exclaimed, "what would his lordship say?" A moment later he was plodding on again through the dust, for the name cut in the black marble square at the side of the gate was not the one for which he was looking.

Tired as he was he was not altogether sorry that the way was longer, particularly as the stretch of wall which now ensued was adorned along its top with a tangle of little pink roses and masses of the flower he loved the best in the world, and now for the first time saw in the perfection of its southern luxuriousness. It was absolutely certain that the person whom he had come all this way to see would care very little about seeing him, and it was as certain that his lordship would be very angry if he ever knew. But in the meantime his lordship was many miles away, and Cazalet's trumpet-like nose was enjoying a feast such as it had never had before.

"Villa Arcadie." That was it, and Cazalet, as he read the half-effaced letters to the right of the rusty gate, put on his hat and brushed his boots carefully with his handkerchief. The gate was ajar, and a few seconds later the old man was walking slowly up the neglected drive, shaking his head slightly at the evidences of an at least comparative poverty. The shaggy grass under the trees was sparse and uncut, weeds grew in the road. "Poor young lady."

Then, as another waft of heliotrope reached him, he added briskly, "but it is—Arcadia!"

The drive was not long but it was cunningly planned in a series of curves, so that Cazalet came to the house with a suddenness that startled him; a square, pink villa, looking with its green shutters all closed as though frowning in the heat.

A few orange-trees drooped in shabby tubs at the edge of the terrace, and to the right, against the splendid blue of the sea, a great magnolia blazed back at the sun, its glossy leaves and vivid cream-coloured flowers gleaming in the glare. Cazalet felt suddenly very warm, and wished he had not dusted his boots with his handkerchief.

And so this was it! This simple, shabby house was Pauline Yeoland's "Arcadia!" The little man sighed, and for some reason tears came to his eyes as he went slowly to the door and rang.

He heard the bell somewhere in the distance, but no one answered it, and after a pause, he rang again. Then, wiping his eyes gingerly on a corner of one of his gloves, he prepared to meet the butler, for Christopher Cazalet was used to butlers.

The door opened suddenly, before any slow footsteps had given him warning, and letting a gush of cool air out into the heat, but there was no butler.

A child stood in the dusk of the brick-paved hall, a little girl of about nine, who held in her arms a small monkey to whose misty dark eyes her own, as she looked coolly at the stranger, bore a grotesque resemblance.

"This is Villa Arcadia?"

"Yes."

"Mr. Sacheverel's place?"

"Yes."

"I—I wish to see Mrs.—that is—Mrs. Sacheverel."

The child shifted the monkey to her other arm. "There isn't any Mrs. Sacheverel," she returned politely. "I suppose you mean my mother, Pauline Yeoland?"

Cazalet caught his breath; he had never been told of this. "Your mother! Yes—yes—I mean—Miss Pauline."

His evident confusion surprised the child, and after a gravely interrogative look, she drew back into the hall.

"Won't you come in and wait?" she said with a curiously grown-up air; "they are not at home now, but they will probably be back before long."

Cazalet followed her past two doors, and then into a room nearly opposite the house-door, where, he had time to reflect, the kitchen ought to be. The room was filled with a cool green dusk, but his small hostess evidently did not consider it necessary to open the shutters. Sitting down on a little gilt sofa she motioned him to a chair, and settled the monkey on her lap.

"It is very warm to-day," she began conversationally.

"Very."

"You should not have come so early; one is apt to get a bad migraine in the sun. I shall never go out in it when I am grown-up."

"You do now?"

"Oh, yes, sometimes; you see, I am only ten."

Cazalet did not smile, for she was very serious.

"But I think you said that—your mother is out?" he resumed after a pause.

"Yes. They went down through the trees to the sea, and it is cool there. May I offer you some refreshment?"

"I should like a glass of water—I am thirsty."

"I know," answered the child sympathetically, going to the bell; "the dust makes a man's throat like a limekiln. It is unsafe to drink pure water when one is overheated, but I will give you some *sirop à l'orange*, it is refreshing."

During the minutes that ensued before the answering of the bell, she sat playing lazily with the monkey, and making an occasional remark, obviously out of politeness.

When at last the silence had been broken by slow footsteps outside, and the door opened, a middle-aged woman with a hard, sharp face came in, starting when she saw the visitor.

"I—didn't know anyone had come," she began apologetically, when Cazalet, rising, turned to her.

"How do you do, Jane?" he said nervously.

"Mr. Cazalet! You here, sir!"

"Yes, it is really me, Jane. I—it is my vacation, and I—thought I would come and see how—you were getting on."

The woman clasped her hands and gazed at him, utterly forgetting, as he had done, the presence of the child.

"I can't rightly believe it is you," she said. "'Is lordship—'is lordship is not——"

Cazalet shook his head and waved his hand in horrified negation. "No, no, his lordship is very well—unusually well, this summer."

"Then—perhaps 'e sent you, Mr. Cazalet?

"Oh no. Oh no, indeed, his lordship did not send me. As a matter of fact Jane, he does not know that I have come."

"Oh, Mr. Cazalet! What will 'e say when he 'ears?" asked the woman, evidently half-frightened by the thought.

Cazalet gave a little nervous laugh. "But he won't hear, Jane. God forbid that he should. And as to that, his lordship thinks me at the present moment eating periwinkles at Margate."

"*What are periwinkles?*" The child's voice startled them both. Unobserved she had come quite close to them, and the monkey's little face pressed to hers, their four dark eyes stared in solemn curiosity at the old man.

"Periwinkles, they are—well, shell-fish, you know."

"And why didn't you tell his lordship that you were coming?"

"Dear me!" ejaculated Cazalet helplessly.

"Never mind now, Miss Pam, there's a good little girl."

"Hold your tongue, Pilgrim," the child answered, not moving her eyes from Cazalet's face. "Go and bring some water and *sirop d'orange* for Mr. Cazalet. That's why I rang."

"Your mamma will be very much displeased if you bother Mr. Cazalet."

"My mamma is never displeased. And some of the little cakes—the ones I hate," went on the child with a sort of patient inexorability. "Why didn't you tell his lordship that you were coming?"

"Why am I to have the cakes you hate?" asked Cazalet, in return.

"Because they are good. Make haste, Pilgrim, and—you may send *Antonio* with the refreshments."

The woman sighed. "You see how it is, Mr. Cazalet; there's no doing anything with her. Well, sir, I shall hope to see you again before you go; I should like to ask after one or two people at 'ome, if I make so bold."

"Make haste, Pilgrim, will you?"

When the servant had left the room, the child went on, her eyes still fixed on Cazalet's face. "Now tell me, please, why you didn't tell my grandfather."

"Because he—well, upon my word, I hardly know what to say to her!" With the curious instinct of man he went to the window in his despair, and pushing open one half of the shutters, stood looking out at the wonderful blue of the southern sea.

NOT EXCHANGEABLE AND

There was a short pause, and then the voice behind him resumed, with a majesty which, absurd as it was, reminded him irresistibly of his lordship. "You really might as well tell me; they always do in the end, you know, so there's no use in making a fuss." The last phrase was so familiar both in substance and in inflection, that Cazalet wheeled about, half-startled and half amused.

"Bless my soul, Miss ——, I don't even know your name, but you are so like his lordship—your way of speaking, I mean—that—it is remarkable!"

"Yes, I am considered very like him; we have the same trick of tramping up and down with our hands behind our backs, when we are nervous or troubled."

"I see. I wonder how soon they—that is, your mother, will be coming; I am rather in a hurry."

She sat down as he spoke, and for the first time she laughed, a sudden, delightfully merry laugh that brought dimples to the corners of her mouth, and danced in her eyes.

"Oh, you wicked old man. You are not a bit in a hurry. You are only afraid of me; you don't want to *tell* me. Very well, I suppose I can tell you instead. You didn't tell my grandfather that you were coming here, because you were afraid!"

"Afraid! That is too much," said Cazalet. "What I do with my holiday is surely——"

"None of my grandfather's business. Just so; and yet, that is why you didn't tell him. He must be a very funny old man."

She stood in the parallelogram of vivid sunlight he had let in, her little slim figure in its faded cotton frock, very erect, the monkey on her shoulder. He noticed with surprise that her hair, less dark than he had at first thought, was arranged in a great flat knot on top of her head.

"Funny! well, no. I don't think any one ever called his lordship funny——"

"I mean because he hates mother."

"Hates"—poor Cazalet's head almost swam, but at this juncture, to his great relief, a young footman in a shabby livery came in with a tray which he set down on the table, and of which the little girl at once began to do the honours.

"Oh, yes, he hates her, of course he does. If he didn't, he would not have been so nasty to her that time. It really wasn't her fault, you see," she went on, bearing a glass full of thickish yellow liquid to him, her left hand balancing the monkey, "that father was married."

If the sweet drink which he hastily swallowed had been flavoured with petroleum, poor Cazalet would not have known it.

He had imagined all sorts of receptions for himself, but this outdid the most startling his mind had been able to conceive.

"You are—a strange child," he stammered, setting down his glass. "I never saw a little girl at all like you."

"Yes, I daresay. What I meant was," she went on, stroking her monkey and speaking with thoughtful slowness, "that my grandfather was very unjust to mother. Of course she and father were sorry about Mrs. Kennedy, but they couldn't very well kill her, could they?"

"Oh, dear me," murmured Cazalet under his breath, picking up his hat.

"Mrs. Kennedy was father's wife," pursued the child gravely, evidently mistaking his exclamation for a question. "His name used to be Kennedy, you know."

"And your name—what do they call you?"

"Pamela, just Pamela. It appears that children whose parents are not married have only one name."

Before he was obliged to reply she had risen suddenly and gone to the nearest window. "Oh!" she cried, her face suddenly glowing, "here they are!"

CHAPTER II

BEHIND the villa a gentle, olive-covered slope led to the sea, and through the trees, as though they had just risen from the blue water, came Pauline Yeoland and "the man," as Christopher Cazalet had most often heard him called.

Over the softly stirring lights and shadows cast by the trees on the coarse grass, one of his arms lying across her shoulders, moving slowly, as if from pleasant fatigue, their movements harmonising like the voices in an often-sung duet, they emerged from the trees, passed up a little flight of stone steps, and came towards the house, not talking, yet evidently in closest companionship of mind and feeling.

She wore white, and carried a lacy parasol against which her bright hair stood out in high relief; her skirt was long, and she held it up a little as she walked.

The man wore white flannels, and a bit of red shone out from beneath his dark face.

Cazalet, as he stood watching their approach, felt his heart throb hard. What would they say to him? He was an uninvited guest, and they might even consider him an intruder.

Pam, standing in front of him, did not speak; she was studying his expression in the reflection in the window, and it evidently satisfied her.

At last, as her parents crossed the last plot of grass before the house, the child called, without moving, "Mother, some one has come!"

"Some one has come? Who, dear?"

The young woman stood still and closed her parasol. "Madame de Vaucourt?" Then, seeing the old man, as Pam came out through the window, she shook her head smiling. "I can't see. it is so bright out here! Who is it, Pam?"

"Mr. Cazalet!"

Cazalet followed the child as she uttered his name, but Pauline did not recognise him. "Cazalet?" she repeated, vaguely, and then before he could speak, she had remembered, and dropping her parasol came towards him, her hand held out cordially.

"Cazzy! You! How glad I am! Guy, this is Mr. Cazalet, whom I have known all my life."

The big man with the handsome blue chin shook hands heartily with his guest, and then turned to the little girl, who stood looking on with something like the satisfaction of a stage-manager who has arranged a good scene.

"Well, Pam?"

"Well, father!"

Cazalet's eyes were wet as he dropped Pauline's hand.

"It is good of you to be so kind to me," he said, clearing his throat. "I—it was bold of me to come."

"Bold! It was—dear of you, Cazzy!"

The brilliant face had grown, it seemed to the man who had not seen it for twelve years, more tender, and the smile gentler, than of old.

"It was my holiday," he explained falteringly, "and—I had never been out of England before—I thought would come here, and see how you were."

"My father, then, doesn't know?"

"Oh, no, his lordship would not—that is, my holiday is my own, Miss Pauline," he returned with some dignity.

"Of course it is. But I don't believe, Cazzy, that he would mind so much as you think."

"His lordship has not spoken to me on the subject for years, but I took it for granted that it would be wiser not to tell him of my intentions."

She seemed on the point of speaking, a little smile curving her lips, and then was silent. "I hope he is well?" she asked at length, watching "the man" and their daughter playing with the monkey.

"Very well, I am glad to say."

"And my sister?"

"Mrs. Maxse is well too."

But she had not listened; and he saw that her interest was perfunctory, as her eyes rested on Sacheverel's dark face. She had grown very far away from her old home, Cazalet felt.

Presently, as the monkey, after being tossed by Sacheverel up into the air like a baby, was returned to Pam, Pauline called, picking up her parasol, "Guy! would you mind telling Pilgrim to prepare a room for Mr. Cazalet?"

Sacheverel nodded, and went in through the window, the child with him.

"But—I couldn't think, Miss Pauline—I beg your pardon."

"Nonsense, of course you are to stay here. You are the only person of the old days who has come, Cazzy—and I love you for it."

She loved him for it—him, her father's steward! It was so like her, the exaggeration; she had changed so little.

"How did you know where we were?" she went on a minute later as they entered the room and she threw open the windows, letting the light stream in on the shabby furniture, but also on the masses of flowers and the thousand little things that go to make a room comfortable and homelike.

Cazalet hesitated. "His lordship told me once that you were living here, and—I had often wondered, and I have a good memory."

"Ah, yes, I see. You think he is still very angry?" she asked, the queer little smile again stirring her lips.

"Angry—ah, yes, Miss Pauline. His lordship——"

The old man hesitated, his plain face red and troubled, and as they followed the others into the pleasant, shabby room, she laid her hand for an instant on his arm.

"I know, Cazzy—I know. It was good of you to come, and I am glad to see you. Tell me, did Rosamund's boy live?"

"Oh, yes," returned the old man, hastily in evident relief at the change of subject; "he is a great tall fellow now."

"What is his name?"

"Botty, they call him; it is some French name, I believe."

"Botty! How extraordinary!" she laughed gaily.

Cazalet watched her with delight. He knew that she deserved anything rather than the obviously unfeigned happiness that shone in her lovely eyes, but he had always been too fond of her not to be glad that things had turned out as they had.

"You have made friends with Pam, I see," she went on, presently taking off her hat, and patting her curly hair in a way he remembered; "isn't she funny?"

"She is remarkably like his lordship!"

"Isn't she? It is perfectly absurd, sometimes; she has a way of walking up and down with her hands behind her back,——"

Cazalet laughed. "I know—when she is nervous. She told me!"

"Oh, she told you! Isn't she delicious?"

"She is very clever. And she seems to—understand things," he began hesitating.

She shook her head gravely. "Yes—I know what you mean. I suppose it—startles you?" She rose from the chair into which she had sunk, and stood looking thoughtfully at him.

"You see, Cazzy, I have never tried to—hide things from her, or from any one else; I was not ashamed. You probably can't understand that, but it is so. I have never called myself by—any name but my own, or pretended to be married. And when she was born, we decided at once not to sacrifice to any gods in which we do not believe, even for her; she knows all about it."

"And—you call her Yeoland, too?"

"Of course. What else? Oh, I know all you think, for you think what every one does, except a few. I am different, you know; I always was. It doesn't bother me a bit, the opinion of the world. I suppose it's true, Cazzy, what they say, about all the Yeoland women being ready to ruin themselves for—love. We are none of us really good, you know, except poor Rosamund, and she," she added with simple conclusiveness, "was so very plain. I remember once when I was a little child, hearing some one say that no woman with Yeoland blood ever had any morals, and I suppose it's true."

She spoke in a tone of mild speculation, not unlightened with amusement, but the old man winced.

"For God's sake, Miss Pauline, don't say such things," he cried involuntarily.

Her smile changed, as she looked at him, to one of great gentleness, and laying her ringless right hand on his arm, she said kindly, "I am sorry; I didn't mean to shock you, but you know as well as I do all about my aunt, Lady Renshaw, for instance. She stayed at home, and kept up appearances, so she was accepted by the world, whereas I—I have *one* lover, who is for me the only man in the world, but as he couldn't marry me, I came to him anyway, and I would die for him to-morrow—and I am an outcast! It is funny, isn't it?" There was no bitterness in her voice, and the old man, trembling with a mixture of feelings, knew that she was sincere.

"If you had been unhappy—" he ventured.

"If I had been unhappy, I might have repented and returned home to be forgiven. But as it is, Cazzy, I pity every other woman in the world because—she has not Guy!"

As she spoke, Sacheverel came in and she ran to him. I have been telling Mr. Cazalet how bad we both are," she said, slipping her arm through his.

"Bad?"

"Because we are happy."

Sacheverel turned and looked at the little old runaway from the camp of the Philistines.

"Is it bad to be happy?" he asked.

Cazalet looked at him keenly, and the steward had some knowledge of human nature. The man's strong dark face while full of a certain hardy animalism, was not bad, and its expression of rapt contentment was rather splendid.

"For if it is—we are damned, dearest," he added, turning to the woman.

And as he watched them Cazalet realised that here, in spite of sin and irregularity, was that rarest thing in the world, a real union.

CHAPTER III

PILGRIM, with her neat brown gown and severe mien was not at all the kind of woman who fits into the frame of a moonlight summer sky by the Mediterranean.

She was a gaunt woman, with many sharp angles in her person, and an appallingly regular row of porcelain teeth, over which her faded lips closed as tightly as if she were afraid some one might steal them.

But as she walked up and down that evening on the terrace farthest from the villa, waiting for the steward, the poor woman's mind was in as great a whirl as if she were young and beautiful, and waiting for a lover.

Whatever one's position and station may be, one has but one life, and Jane Pilgrim had sacrificed hers that night twelve years ago, when she had accompanied her young mistress to Dover, where Sacheverel, the tenor, was awaiting them.

And while the mistress, rapt in the perfect warmth of her great love, felt no cold, the maid, standing alone, and bereft of her old garment of self-respect, shivered and ached under the bitter winds that shook her as they blew unheeded by the woman for whose sake she had denuded herself.

The joy was all Pauline Yeoland's; the shame all Jane Pilgrim's. And the natural consequence of it was that while Pauline in her happiness grew sweeter and gentler, losing the carelessness and flightiness of former days, Jane, all unrewarded, became bitterer and sharper as time went on. All of which is as things should not be, but as they sometimes are. The sight of Christopher Cazalet that afternoon had given the woman a great shock, calling back old faces and old voices to her memory, and bringing to her the feeling of old times in a degree almost painful. She so longed for a talk with the visitor that she would probably have ventured to ask her mistress to be allowed to have a few words with him, if Cazalet himself had not sent word to her that he wished to see her, and would come out later to smoke his pipe in her company.

At last he came, and they sat down on a stone bench facing seawards.

"Well, Jane, and so here we are," he began, stuffing his little meerschaum pipe from a leather bag.

"Yes, Mr. Cazalet. I'm sure it's a surprise to see *you* here."

"It must be. The truth is, Jane, it is my annual holiday, and I couldn't resist——"

"'Is lordship, I daresay, wouldn't be pleased——"

"His lordship would be very angry. I had no idea of ever telling him," the little man went on, "but, now—I am not sure."

"You're not sure, Mr. Cazalet?"

"You see, Jane, I had never heard that there was a child."

"Oh! Oh, yes. There's Miss Pam."

"How old is she?"

"Ten, sir."

"H'm. It—seems a pity. I mean, she is an extraordinary little thing; very precocious. I had a long talk with her."

"Yes, sir."

"She has—few delusions. She seems to understand her mother's situation far too well. I confess I am puzzled, Jane."

Pilgrim was silent. She had not been called Jane since she left Monk's Yeoland.

"And, of course," the steward went on, smoking thoughtfully, his bald head bent over the hand in which his pipe was snuggled, "You took your choice then—when you went, and I can quite understand that living with them, and seeing them so—happy—you have got so used to it all, that it has lost its look of strangeness——"

Jane Pilgrim rose suddenly.

"Me! I, Mr. Cazalet! *I* got used to it! That it's lost its look of strangeness to *me!* Me, that has cried myself to sleep night and night again. Me that hussies with gendarmes and chassoors turns up their noses at, because I live in such a house! me a respectable girl, the child of lawful wedded parents! Mr. Cazalet, you don't know!"

Her face worked, her voice broke, and Cazalet let his pipe go out.

"There, there, don't cry—or rather do. It will do you good. I beg your pardon, I am sure, Jane, I didn't mean to hurt your feelings. But I am glad you feel it this way, for you will understand what I am going to say. It's about the child, Miss Pam."

Pilgrim wiped her eyes and rolled her handkerchief into a ball as she listened.

"But there's no use, Mr. Cazalet; she understands it as well as you or I. They never pretend, you know. It's awful. At first I used to call 'er 'Madame' to the other servants in the 'otels, but when she found out she nearly killed me—Miss Pauline, I mean. And Miss Pam——"

"I know. She told me herself. But though she knows, my good Jane, she cannot *understand*. And it seems to me that if I could persuade his lordship to take the poor little thing, do you think they would let her go?"

"To Monk's Yeoland? I *know* they would. Oh, Mr. Cazalet, it's an awful thing, but she doesn't love Miss Pam as a wedded mother would. She is kind and good to her, but—it's all *him* really."

"Yes. I saw that. Then you think they'd let her go?"

Pilgrim hesitated. "I am almost sure. It would save her, and I often worry about Pam—Miss Pam, I mean. It would be awkward when she grew older. The people they see aren't the people for a young girl."

Cazalet did not answer, but his old face saddened.

"There are one or two gentlemen—the Count de Vaucourt, who lives at the villa below us—he comes.

He's married to his wife, but she was divorced, and her maid told me that no one in Paris goes to see her. They come, and an Italian lady. She acts in plays, and is very rich and famous, but she isn't respectable. She is invited everywhere," the woman added hastily, "but because she's an *artiste*, Marie, the Countess's maid, says. They're the only women. And the men—well——"

"They must be gentlemen," remarked the steward sharply, "for he wouldn't introduce them to *her*."

"Of course they are gentlemen; one of them's a duke. But I don't like 'em, and what would they think of Pam when she is grown—whose child is she? Wouldn't they just say 'what was good enough for the mother is good enough for her?' Of course they would!"

Cazalet nodded. "That was what I meant. I shall tell his lordship, Jane. He has grown older and is lonely too. I hope they will let her come. Mrs. Maxse is there with her son, and she always was fond of Miss Pauline."

"Yes, Miss Rosamund is kind. Oh, Mr. Cazalet, do try, sir. It would be a good work. It—them two are like a pair of children. They don't care for anything so long as they can be together. I remember that day when Miss Pauline said she was going, how 'is lordship told her 'Men are never true to women, but they at least pretend to be to their wives. This fellow will leave you in a year.' Oh, the things his lordship said to her! And they were all wrong. Mr. Sacheverel never looks at any woman. I don't believe he knows there are any in the world but her; and leave her? 'E hasn't left her for a day in all these years, Mr. Cazalet! It's all wrong. They ought to be un'appy, for the moral, sir, though God knows I couldn't bear to see her un'appy—but they are the 'appiest two people in the world. And to think how some respectable married folks do fight and hate each other!"

"Well, I shall speak to his lordship, Jane."

The steward rose and knocked his pipe against a tree.

"I shall then write Miss Pauline on the subject. God bless my soul, what's that?" he added pointing to something white in a near shadow.

"It's only me," observed the white thing, rising, and proving to be Pamela in a frilly nightgown.

"Oh, Miss Pam! You have been listening! Fie on you!"

The child laughed. "Why should I be fied on? I came out for a walk because it is so warm, and you didn't hear me, and I did hear you. If you'd heard me you'd have stopped talking. When," she went on, turning to Cazalet, "am I to go to my grandfather's?" The old man watched her curiously.

"Aren't you ashamed to listen to what was not meant for you?" he asked, not reproachfully but as a question demanding an answer. She shrugged her shoulders.

"No. What is meant for me is never interesting. When am I to go to my grandfather's?"

"Your grandfather won't love you if you sneak," put in Pilgrim.

"Hold your tongue, Pilgrim."

Then the child, whose hair, reaching below her knees, hung about her small face and over her shoulders like a mantle, turned again to Cazalet.

"When am I to go to my grandfather?" she repeated.

CHAPTER IV

EARLY the next morning Cazalet was awakened by a loud knocking at his door, and a minute later Pam was coiled up at the foot of his bed, her stiffly starched pink frock like a fresh flower, her hands clasped around her pointed knees.

"Mother sent Antonio to wake you, so I thought I'd come. You must hurry, for we're going to a picnic."

"A picnic!"

"Yes. We are going on the Vaucourt's yacht to the island for luncheon, and then on—somewhere. They all dine here to-night. Aren't you glad?" she added curiously, studying his face.

"Oh yes, of course, but I think perhaps I had better not go. You see, my dear, I am not—that is, I am only his lordship's steward."

"Rubbish! Mother says you're to go. It's great fun; I'm going. Madame Ravaglia is going, too, and she'll recite. It's splendid when she recites; makes one cold all down one's spine."

Cazalet gasped. The great Ravaglia, to see whom, as Pia Tolomei, he had paid his fifteen shillings six months before, and whose history was in every mouth. He was to meet her!

"I love her dearly," the child went on, hopping down from the bed and making a low curtsey to herself in the glass. "She teaches me to recite; I have great dramatic talent. Oh, there's Caliban!"

Poor Cazalet was in such a mental state that if when he opened the door the real Caliban of the Tempest had come in, he would hardly have been surprised, but it was only the monkey, who fled, chattering and excited, into his mistress's arms, and lay there like a baby while she soothed him.

"He has got out! They lock him up because he gets so seasick, but he always feels when there's going to be a picnic, and he always comes. Don't you, Cally?'

Then she added, "Well, I'll go now, and please make haste, for it's after six and we always start at seven. It's so warm, you know. Cazalet rose in a tremor of excitement.

It was such a change from his quiet life in the silent house in Yeoland.

Day after day, year after year, he rose there, knowing just what the hours held for him. A talk with his lordship, a ride over the estate, slow conversations with slow-minded tenants, heavy English meals served by his good old housekeeper, his sleep after luncheon, his London paper, more work, his glass of whiskey and water, bed.

And this golden day whose bold fingers had forced his shaded windows, held for him—what?

The old man almost scampered to the window and let in the light. Before him stretched the sea, sparkling and blue as the sky above it. A strong scent of heliotrope came up to him from the garden, bringing with it a sudden vivid remembrance of his feelings as, yesterday on the hot road, it had reached him for the first time.

It was all wrong, of course he ought to go at once, and his staying was a tacit approval of the family disgrace—but—his holiday was his own, and he was after all not his lordship's servant.

Half an hour later a merry, rosy Cazalet, ten years younger than the old man who had only yesterday plodded up the hill, joined the little party on the lawn.

Pauline, in a charming costume of blue linen, gave him her hand with her old careless cordiality, and Sacheverel was politely friendly.

"A perfect day for a picnic," he said, as the shabby young footman started off down the hill with a bundle of parasols and wraps. "I am glad you are here to enjoy it with us." Cazalet repeated his doubts to them, but Pauline laughed gaily. "My dear Cazzy, you have proved

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yourself our friend by coming, and as to that, you have always been my father's friend."

Sacheverel took up his hat. "We'd better start, Pauline; it is rather late."

The way to the sea led first through an olive orchard, then through a perfectly kept park, which Pauline told her guest was the property of their host, Count de Vaucourt, and then, twisting and turning curiously, it struck into the bowels of the earth, and the steward found himself in an underground gallery cut out of solid rock, and lighted by an occasional air-hole, on which the bright sky seemed to rest.

At the foot of the descent, spread the brilliant blue sea, and at the end of the stone pier, where the yacht was moored, several people were standing about, talking and laughing. The Countess, a handsome woman of about thirty-eight, with a carefully done up face under a thick lace veil, greeted the steward, who was introduced merely as a friend, with civil indifference, and then, when a small, rather fat man in knickers had shaken hands with him, Cazalet found himself making a low bow to a thin, yellow-faced woman in an unbecomingly plain hat and a crumpled linen gown. This was she who had made him cry like a baby in the Italian play of which he had not understood a word. Pam stood on one side watching the little scene with her curious air of detached curiosity, and when Cazalet, after a stumbling remark to the great artiste, had turned in his embarrassment to the little white yacht, the child came forward, and sitting down by Madame Ravaglia, took her thin hand in hers and kissed it reverently.

"Buon' giorno, piccina!"

"Buon' giorno, grandezza!"

The two, so unalike, smiled at each other, and Cazale turning, saw with a little start, that something identic looked out from the two pairs of eyes.

And then, as they all went on board, the old man sighe as he recalled the same look in the eyes of Caliban th evening before. The veiled sadness of monkey-eyes ha in it something approaching the expression of those ou of which looks the sad mystery of genius.

There is an island lying flat on the water, not far from the slope on which Pauline Yeoland's Arcadia was situated, and to this island, after a two hours' flight under the shore, the Yacht *Delphine* bent its wings.

A cool breeze had come up and the boat sped over crisp ruffled waves that now and then broke into a white frill, and sparkled in the sun.

"The landing is in there—quite hidden, you see," Pam explained to Cazalet. "The island belongs to the monks, but M. de Vaucourt has rented a little bit of the wood, and we come often—it is cooler than on the mainland."

It was very beautiful, and the old man who had drudged and toiled for others all his life, who had never had any pleasure, and to whom Love had turned a scornful wing, felt as though he were young for the first time.

Sacheverel and Miss Pauline were not married; the little painted Countess was not visited; and as to the plain silent woman with the monkey-eyes——!

Yet these bad people were all charming, and in his sudden moral paralysis, Cazalet felt that they were all charming because they were all happy.

How gay they were! The Count had brought a great basket on board, and its contents remained a mystery until just before they landed on the island, when he opened it and tossed from it handfuls of roses and heliotrope to the women, whose cries of delight, softened by the water, fell like music on the air.

"Take mine, please, Carissima!"

Pam had made a great bunch of heliotrope and was pressing it into the actress's hands.

"It is so sweet; it makes one dizzy with joy. I wish I could die with smelling it too much," the child cried, and Ravaglia fastened the offering to her gown with a big jewelled pin.

The bit of purple sweetness in his button-hole seemed to the steward an order that joined him to the community of careless people he so enjoyed. He was not an old, hard-working business-man; he was any age he chose to be, and the world was full of beauty.

They breakfasted in a shadowy hollow in the woods, and when they had gone on a little farther, leaving the servants to clear away the débris of the meal, they all sat or lay down, and Ravaglia recited to them.

What it was all about Cazalet had no idea, but the magic of her wonderful voice was enough for the old man, who closed his eyes and dreamed of things he had never known.

Pauline and Sacheverel sat together, her golden head resting frankly on his shoulder, while the fat little count and his wife listened hand in hand.

There was no decent English reserve, but Cazalet was not shocked. It was Arcadia!

"Don't you want to know what she said?"

It was Pam who had crept up to Cazalet. "You don't understand Italian, do you?"

"No. I don't understand——"

The child rose. "I will tell you; I have heard it before and have put it into English."

The others watched her with lazy amusement as she began, her thin little body well-balanced, her eyes half closed in close immitation of the artiste, but Cazalet, as she continued, felt the rosy mists that had folded him being rent as by a strong rough hand.

"—and your mouth it is crimson like a pomegranate flower,
Sweet as honey on Hymettus's fragrant slopes,
And bitter as sea-salt's edge—"

There was an attempt at rhythm in the rough translation.

Catch me then close to your heart whose throbs
Break like great waves on mine;
Blind my eyes with your stinging hair, and forget
With me all but just that; the beat of the blood,
The burn of the kiss——"

"Bravo!"

"Bravissima, Pam!"

Cazalet rose, his wrinkled face red.

"Pam, come with me and show me the monastery," he said hurriedly, conscious of his own confusion, and angry with everybody, the child herself included.

"No, no. I want her to do 'Le Passionale,'" laughed Pauline.

Sacheverel looked at the steward.

"You're right, Mr. Cazalet," he said; "the convent is very interesting. Go, Pam." And Cazalet drew a sigh of relief.

As they went up the sandy road to the low building against the sky line, the old man was bitterly ashamed of himself. How he had been drawn into the whirlpool!

He would get back to England as quickly as possible and tell his lordship and Mrs. Maxse all about it; all about Pam.

Surely they would not let the child, after all their own flesh and blood, stay where she was. It was impossible.

He sighed. He would have a bad half hour with his lordship.

"Don't you like to hear me recite, Mr. Cazalet?" asked the child curiously, as they walked hand in hand past a garden in which a busy monk was digging.

"I'd rather see you playing with a doll, my dear."

"Would you? I had a doll when I was small; M. de Sant' Anna's dog ate it."

"Dear me! But surely you have had others?" queried the old man, surprised at the fierce note in her voice.

She turned, her eyes veiled with unshed tears.

"I never wanted another," she said. "Ah! there is Pater Demetrio. He will be glad to see me."

Cazalet knew that she had changed the subject on purpose, and said no more about the doll.

CHAPTER V

LORD YEOLAND sat on the north terrace in his wheel-chair. It was a charming windless summer morning, and from where the old man sat everything was green; the beautiful sappy green of England. Even the walls of the red house were hung with vines, and the terrace was garlanded with oaks and beeches. A distant clock struck eleven, and Lord Yeoland raised his head sharply. Cazalet had said eleven, and he was always prompt. It was a good quality, a most excellent quality—in others. No Yeoland had ever possessed it, as the old man acknowledged to himself with a chuckle, but in others he had found it invaluable.

There was little of the stern father of fiction in Lord Yeoland. In spite of his gout he was still young-looking for his years, and his carefully shaven pink face was round and dimpled.

It had been a great blow to him when his favourite daughter had informed him that she was going off with Guy Sacheverel, but he had no long line of spotless womenkind behind him to whose ashes he burnt incense and whose ghosts barred the way to forgiveness. All the Yeoland women were easy-going as to morals, and as the men had most of them been successful in whatever kind of life they had chosen, the doings of the women were less important than they might have been. Pauline would have been welcome to Sacheverel as a husband, for the fellow was great in his line, and a charming person, but her going to him in defiance of everything as she had done was rather too much, even for a Yeoland, and her father had cast her off in the approved style.

The Kennedy woman had come to see him and wept. Though rather pretty she was an unattractive person, and her nose was glossy; he had tried to persuade her that her most dignified course was to divorce her husband. This, however, she flatly refused to do, and finding that Lord Yeoland could not overtake and shut up his destructive daughter, retired to her suburb and was no more heard of.

Rosamund—the old man's clever mouth gave a humorous twist as he thought of his other daughter; Rosamund was that exception to the rule—a virtuous Yeoland; and she was a good, tender daughter, a devout churchwoman, a loyal wife, a careful mother.

But she had white eyelashes and no sense of humour. Pauline had not been gone six months before her father, unknown to every one, wrote offering to forgive and take her back if she would give up Sacheverel.

This she refused to do, and he recognised in her brief letter a happiness so complete that she hardly remembered things that lay behind and beyond it.

One day in Paris he had passed her leaning on Sacheverel's arm, and—she had not seen him! So he had given up hoping for her return. Once or twice he had written to her. She had answered with absent-minded amiability, and that was all. And now Cazalet was bringing her child to him!

Poor Cazzy, who had believed him as implacable as he should have been, and who had been pale with fright as he told the tale of his flight into Arcadia!

It had amused the old man to feign the expected anger, and to allow the good steward to persuade him by much earnest eloquence to take the unfortunate child.

At last he had consented, Mrs. Maxse had positively jumped at the chance to do a good work, and—it was a quarter-past eleven, and—yes, there they came!

Cazalet, when he had shown the child her grandfather's solitary figure, discreetly retired, and she came on alone. She walked well, erect, and as though the muscles of her legs and feet were strong. [illegible] and white sailor hat suited her.

Her monkey in her arms she came deliberately up the steps, neither slowly nor fast, and when she had reached

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NOT EXCHANGEABLE AND
NOT SALABLE

her grandfather, held out her small gloved hand with a quiet air that surprised him.

"How do you do, my dear?" he said kindly. "I am very glad to see you."

"I am quite well, thank you."

Her dark eyes, shadowed by unusually long and silky lashes were her only beauty, he noticed. Her nose was rather round and her mouth too large.

"You are not much like your mother."

"No, I am like my father."

"Your father was a very handsome man, my dear."

"He is still a very handsome man; and I am ugly, you mean? I am at the ugly age."

The old man burst out laughing. "Are you indeed Well, let us hope you will improve. You are ten, Cazalet tells me."

"Yes."

"That is a monkey?"

Her eyes twinkled. "No, it is a humming-bird."

It did not occur to him to reprove her, and when he had done laughing he continued: "I have heard nothing at all about you since your birth."

Cazzy had told him of her quaint remarks, and he was trying to draw her out.

"I suppose not." He was disappointed.

"Why do you suppose not? Why should she not tell me about you?"

"I mean—because you hate her."

He started. "Hate her! Nonsense. Who told you that?"

"Pilgrim told me."

'Pilgrim? Who is he?'

'Jane Pilgrim, my mother's maid. She is my nurse now, and I brought her here."

"Indeed! I should have thought that she brought you."

"Servants do not bring ladies. May I have a bath, please?"

Her change of theme was intentional, he saw; she had had enough of Pilgrim.

"If you will ring the bell just inside that door—to the right, you may have as many baths as you please.

When you are dressed, come to my room. I wish to present your aunt to you."

"You are laughing at me because I said that about Pilgrim. One doesn't present grown people to children." Then her sombre eyes suddenly flashed, and she burst out laughing. "I am glad I came," she exclaimed. "I'm sure we shall be great friends. I am exactly like you in some ways!"

A few minutes later he returned to the subject of her bath, and shaking hands once more with him, she went into the house.

When she had disappeared, Lord Yeoland steered his chair down the terrace, into the billiard-room, through a long corridor, to a lift in which he mounted to the second floor, and a few minutes later knocked at his daughter's door.

Mrs. Maxse was writing.

"Ah, father!"

Rising, she waited until he had manœuvred his chair into his favourite corner by the window, and then sat down by him.

"Well—she has come?"

"Yes. She is interesting."

"Poor child. It is very sad for her."

The old man laid his delicate finger tips together and looked at her with pleasant authority. "Now, Rosamund, I wish you to understand that I will not have her *pitied*. She is very amusing and original, and I don't wish you to spoil her."

"Spoil her! But I had no idea of such a thing."

"We use the word in different ways. You may kiss her and pet her as much as she will let you," he added with a little laugh, "but I don't have her wept over or compassionated with. She knows that most people's father and mother are married, and that hers are not; but that, Cazalet tells me, she regards merely as an interesting peculiarity. It appears that—*hm!*—Pauline and the fellow are very happy, so that the child has always been happy too."

"Happy! Poor Pauline!"

The elder sister drew a deep sigh, and her plain red face paled a little.

"Yes, my dear. All these years, while you have been lamenting over and praying for your lost sister, she has been living in Arcadia. The villa is named Villa Arcadie, it seems. Cazalet says she looks very handsome, and that she and Sacheverel are utterly devoted to each other."

"Oh, father!" Mrs. Maxse's dull, gentle eyes filled with tears. "How awful it is!"

"I disagree with you, Rosamund. As long as she chose to give up everything for the one man, I am glad she finds that she has got, so to say, her money's worth. Cazalet tells me that coming home in the evening on the yacht, Sacheverel sang; he says that he never dreamed of such music. I must confess," he added, after a short pause, "that I regret that my position denies me the pleasure of—a visit to Arcadia."

Mrs. Maxse, who had carefully guarded during all those years the secret of her father's real attitude towards his erring daughter, sighed. She had, long ago, made an attempt to lead the sinner back to the path of righteousness, but it had ended by Pauline, in a towering rage, having requested her to leave the room, and since then the poor woman, honestly mourning her sister, and sincerely praying for the pardon which she believed to be impossible, had heard nothing of her.

"Has she—been taught anything?" she asked after a pause.

"Pauline? Oh, the child. I'm sure I don't know. She will be coming to my room shortly, to meet you. Where's Ratty?"

"Riding."

"Where's Dick?"

"I don't know. I havn't seen him this morning."

"He's in debt again."

She clasped her hands nervously. "I know. Oh, father, I am so ashamed."

"You needn't be, my dear. It is not your fault. Nor is it on you—" he broke off. "I beg your pardon, Rosamund."

She rose. "As the child Pamela is going to my room had we not better go down?"

CHAPTER VI

WHEN Pam had been inspected by her aunt she was told by her grandfather to go out and take a look at things.

"You will see everything much more satisfactorily by yourself," the old man added, "people who show their possessions and surroundings to a stranger are always biased, and they bias and bore the stranger."

Mrs. Maxse sighed. Her father's ways were to her to this day the ways of an unknown being, their natures being so unlike as to utterly forbid even a moderate understanding of each other, although half unconsciously the poor little woman realised that her view of him, like that of the tortoise of the hawk, was less comprehensive than his, as he looked down, of her.

"Ratty would love to show Pamela the place," she ventured.

"Which is really," interrupted Lord Yeoland, "why I'm sending her now, before Ratty comes. Cut along, Pam."

And Pam cut along. She had seen deer browsing in the distance as she had been driven up the avenue, and deer had for her the charm they always have for imaginative childhood.

Crossing the square hall she went out into the old-fashioned portico and walked slowly across the lawn.

The dimpled hollows of the park filled with waving lights and shadows, were most beautiful. It was very different from Italy.

The flower-beds, a blaze of well-massed colour, were more gorgeous than any she had ever seen, and the splendour of old oaks, each one a personality, was not wasted on the child, whose quick eyes saw everything and whose quick brain was appreciative in spite of her quite unusual ignorance.

In the middle of the lawn she paused, and turning, her hands clasped behind her, inspected the house.

The body of it was ugly, early Georgian, solid, pretentious, and ponderous in its lines, but to the left was a wing of Tudor architecture, beautiful in its ivy-clad age, and to the right, separated by a graceful arch, through which, extending thus between it and the main building, stretched a walk of perfect turf, edged with graceful limes, stood the ruins of the old monastery from which the place took its name.

The ruins, deftly propped and strengthened were among the oldest in that part of England, and their ragged lines, sharp drawn against the sky, and the green of the limes, contrasted oddly with the solid comfort of the house itself.

Again to the right, beyond the bit of crumbling wall that marked where the chapel had been, a square carp pond gleamed in the midst of all the greenness.

The little girl sighed with delight. It was all very splendid, and she was the grand-daughter of its owner.

She would go up into the tower some day; there was sure to be a nook where she could hide with a book from the boy Ratty, of whom her grandfather and her aunt had several times spoken, and who was bound to be objectionable.

In the meantime that surely was a deer, stepping daintily through the distant trees. Shifting Caliban to her other shoulder she walked on. An hour later, her hands still behind her, she entered the monastery ruins, and sitting down in the refectory drew a long breath. The narrow windows let in but little sun, and the vast place was dusky, even at noon, for in its midst grew a great oak, and where so long ago the monks' sandalled feet had trod, acorns rested in thick grass.

The child looked up at the great tree and wondered how old it was. It must be, according to her simple lore, at least four hundred years, in which case the monks must have lived even longer ago than that. She imagined them, as she knew monks in Italy, burly, brown-faced men in rough woollen frocks. She imagined a long table with pewter plates and thick glasses of oily black wine; in the niche where she sat at the end of the room, had sat, no doubt, the reading brother behind his desk and read aloud to the others while they broke their fast.

She wondered if they had said "Memento mori" to each other, and gave a little shiver. She was beginning to *feel* them.

From behind the oak she could almost see the face of a young monk who sometimes had come to the villa; Padre Ignazio. She had liked him, for he had handsome grey eyes and strong white teeth that flashed.

"And when they had eaten everything," she thought, "they all said an Ave together; '*Ave Maria.*'"

Suddenly she rose, and setting down the monkey, took off her hat and pulled from her hair the three big pins that fastened it to her crown.

The heavy mass waving down over her dark frock hung like a cowl, hiding her ears and her shoulders. She was a monk. And she was not only a monk of five hundred years ago, but she was beautiful young Father Ignatius translated backwards to that period.

She felt her eyebrows assume the patient curve of his; she felt her teeth flash under a budding moustache.

"Ave Maria, gratia plena——"

Her voice, full and slightly veiled like Ravaglia's, deepened as she went on and she heard her brethren join her prayer which turned to Italian as she continued.

"Sancta Maria, Mater Dei, ora pro nobis—" Her eyes were full of tears and her voice shook; "'et in hora mortis nostræ.' What a terrible, cold black word, 'mortis!'—'*la morte.*'"

"I say, you are a queer one."

The reincarnation of the Reading Brother gave a great start, and then a cool laugh.

"Am I? I suppose you're Ratty? Well, Ratty, you are too fat for your size, and I hate white mice, so don't come any nearer, please."

The boy who was coming slowly towards her stopped.

The sensation of having the tables turned completely on one is never quite pleasant, and possibly it is never less so than when one is a male creature of thirteen much spoiled by prosperity, and the turner merely a girl, and three years younger than one's self.

"I shan't come any nearer," the boy returned sulkily; "and if I'm too fat, you are a precious lot too thin, let me tell you. You're Aunt Pauline's daughter. Grandfather told me you were prowling about."

"I wasn't prowling. How old are you?"

"Thirteen and a half." Ratty had fully intended taking and keeping the upper hand of this person, inferior from every point of view, as it seemed to him; but somehow he found himself answering her rapid fire of questions in an inexplicably meek way. Afterwards he explained his attitude to himself by calling it that of politeness, which has occurred before.

"What's your real name?"

"De Rattrec Gilbert Yeoland Maxse."

"And you live here?"

"Yes."

"Any brothers or sisters?"

"One; a sister. I say, is the monkey yours?"

"Yes; don't touch him please. What's her name, and how old is she?"

While the boy answered that her name was Evelyn and that she was eleven, Pam rolled her hair into a long rope, and bending her head coiled the rope into its usual place. Then pinning on her hat she remarked casually: "Well, I'm hungry, so it must be luncheon time. Good-bye."

But Ratty, with all the male's usual desire for what seems to be turning inaccessible, pocketed his mice and joined her.

"I'm hungry too. I say, what a lot of hair you have!"

Pam looked at him out of the ends of her eyes, scorning the tribute of a turned head. "Yes, it is very beautiful hair, but it is heavy."

"I suppose that is why you wear it done up at your age."

"Partly that, and partly because if I let it hang things would get in it and it would have to be cut off."

"Well, if it did? You'd be much more comfortable with a short mane like Evelyn."

Then she turned. "I'd die if my hair was cut off, de Rattrec Gilbert Yeoland Maxse," she said, with passionate solemnity. "I'd die, do you hear?"

The boy stared at her curiously, but the passivity of those born fat and destined to live and die fat, was his.

After a moment he asked, "What were you doing there in the refectory?"

"Did you like it?"

"Like it? how do you mean?'

Her eyes flashed at him. "I mean, wasn't it splendid, the 'hora mortis nostræ'? I never got down so deep before."

"It sounded like a bass-viol, if that's what you mean," he returned, rather meaning, in a weak way, to be offensive, but to her surprise she threw her arms about his neck and gave him a hasty but grateful kiss. "Did it? Oh, I *am* glad. You are a nice boy, even if you are fat. I'll do a lovely one for you after lunch—a poem, I mean."

They had reached the portico, and she stopped short, with a dramatic wave of her hand. "But you don't speak Italian," she cried. "It is a pity—but I will learn some English ones!"

CHAPTER VII

THE days passed by, and Pam hardly noticed their flight. She was not at all homesick, and once when Mrs. Maxse asked her if she did not miss her mother, the child answered "No, but I am afraid she will miss me."

"Why should she miss you if you don't miss her?"

"Because—I take care of her. I brush her hair always, and I rub her wrists when she can't sleep, and so on. I don't miss her because I am amused; one is homesick only when one is lonely."

Poor Rosamund Maxse sighed.

"I hope Evelyn would miss me if she were away," she said.

Pam flashed a queer look at her.

"Of course she would; that is different. You don't love Mr. Maxse, so of course you love her more than mother loves me."

"Pamela! I'm—you mustn't say such things," cried the poor woman. "Of course I love Mr. Maxse!"

"I don't think you do. *I* don't call it love. Now father and mother—" She broke off, gazing thoughtfully out of the window.

"But if they love each other so much, I don't see why you say Pauline should miss you so," went on Mrs. Maxse, feeling that she was being undignified in arguing with the child, and yet urged on in spite of herself.

Pam laughed.

"That isn't love; it's comfort. And she likes my loving her."

Rosamund again could not resist; something in the child seemed to lead her on against her will. "Then you do love her?" she asked.

Pam turned. "Do I love her? *Do I love her?* And you are her own sister!" The scorn in her voice, instead of irritating Mrs. Maxse suddenly appeased her.

"I know," she said humbly enough. "It was always that way with Pauline. I used to wonder why it was, for it was not only her beauty. There were other girls as beautiful as she, but it was for her that the sacrifices were made. Beginning with Jimmy Leslie and ending, so far as we know," she went on, "with poor Jane. I have often wondered about it, for she did not care much for *them*."

"I know what it is. It's her temperament."

Poor Rosamund, who had no idea of what temperament was, but vaguely believed it to be something bad and unspeakable, gave a nervous start. "My dear child! What words you do use!"

"I can't help it," insisted Pam, with civil obstinacy, "it is that. Comte de Vaucourt said so."

"Comte who? And to whom? Surely he didn't talk about such things to you!"

"No. He was talking to Madame Ravaglia one day in the garden when we first knew her. She was asking him some things about father. She knew, of course, that he was an artist, and as it appears that artists do not often love one person for long at a time, she said that she was surprised that father still cared for mother."

"Oh!" gasped her aunt.

"And M. de Vaucourt," pursued the child serenely, "said that he explained it by the fact of mother's having a devil of a temperament. It sounds worse in English, somehow," she added apologetically, "but 'le diable' is really nothing, you know."

A burst of masculine laughter interrupted her, and Dick Maxse issued from behind the *portière*, his good-looking face red with suppressed mirth.

"'A devil of a temperament,'" he quoted, his hands in his trousers pockets, grinning down at his wife's niece, "I believe you!"

"*Dick!*"

"Well, of course she has, my dear. I once wanted to marry your mother myself," he added, turning to Pam. "How would you have liked me for your father?"

"That is perfectly impossible," she answered coldly, "for I am half of my own father, and if I'd been half of you I'd have been—well—very different!"

Maxse giggled and lit a cigarette. "Well, how would you have been, if you were half of me?" he asked. "Would you have had my beautiful mouth, do you think?"

"It was disgusting of Ratty to tell you I said that," the girl burst out angrily, rising, "and I thought so only at first. I hate your mouth, and if you ever try to kiss me again I'll bite you."

He glanced uneasily at his wife, and gave a nervous laugh.

"You're a rude little beggar," he commented, but Pam, without waiting to hear his remark had marched out, slamming the door.

As she went downstairs she heard footsteps behind her, and turning, saw Cazalet.

"Oh, Cazzy, I *am* glad to see you. Where have you been?"

"With his lordship, my dear. What is the matter?"

His kind eyes had at once noted the unusual red in her cheeks, and red with Pam was always a danger signal.

"I have been rude again to Mr. Maxse, but I do hate him so. He makes my flesh creep, nasty jelly-fish!"

Cazalet suppressed a laugh that was not entirely without the element of pleasure.

"Be careful, my dear!"

"Well, he is. Father is twice as big, yet father is as hard as iron, and Mr. Maxse looks as if he'd collapse if you pricked him—bah!"

There was something unchildlike in her dislike of her aunt's husband, and Cazalet realised it. "He is considered handsome," he observed mildly, as they came out into the sun, where his little dog-cart was waiting for him. Pam got in without asking leave and he drove off.

"I know. He's handsome—but I hate him. He kissed me one day," she added half amusedly, "and I nearly put his eye out. I only meant to scratch him, but he wriggled."

Cazalet did not laugh. It had come to seem to him his duty to preserve as best he could this wild vine planted by his advice in the home soil. "You are too big to scratch people," he said seriously.

"Then I'm too big to be kissed," was her prompt reply.

They drove down the long avenue, past the lodge, and out into the sunny road high.

"I am coming to tea," Pam remarked at length. "I haven't been for a long time."

"Did you tell any one?"

"No, but they won't be anxious. They are used to my being late. All Yeolands are unpunctual, my G. F. says, and when I am later than usual, they send for Pilgrim and she tells them how much worse I used to be, and that consoles them."

"Well, it appears to me that you do about as you like in most things."

They had reached the turn in the road and were off between golden stubble fields, beyond which the little town lay hidden in a fold in the hills.

"I always do what I like."

"Always? That is impossible."

Their eyes met defiantly. "Well—if I absolutely can't, then I stop bothering and do some other thing that I want to." The whole of philosophy in a nutshell.

Mrs. Hamp, Cazalet's housekeeper, was very fond of Pam, and the child's coming was the signal for the production of such wonders as damson jam, sweet biscuits, and even exceedingly hard sweets done up in striped paper, of which the house was at other times apparently innocent.

Pam was hungry, and enjoyed her feast with childhood's pleasing greediness.

Cazalet watched her a little wistfully.

"Pam," he said after a long pause. "What do you hear from your mother?"

"Nothing in particular. They are both well, and father has been singing a great deal. Figs have begun, and Assuntina, the farmer's daughter, has twins. I wish," she added, licking her spoon, "that I had twins."

"Bless me! Well, perhaps you may, some day."

Mrs. Hamp, who had come in on some housewifely pretext, laughed heartily. "Perhaps your husband might not be pleased, though, Miss Pam. The doctor, poor dear gentleman, was very much put out, the last time——"

"I am not going to have a husband."

"Well, really! Now what a young lady you are, to be sure! There's no danger of *your* being an old maid," ejaculated the good woman hastily, to cover her own and her master's confusion.

Pam laughed.

"Who said I was going to be an old maid? Of course I shan't. I shall have a lover and he will adore me, as father adores mother, but marriage is a *bétise*."

Poor Mrs. Hamp left the room overcome.

"Imagine me being an old maid," remarked Pam, helping herself again to damson jam.

CHAPTER VIII

ONE of the advantages of being a nomad is that one has almost literally no social duties.

One camps for a time where one likes, setting up one's movable Lares and Penates in strange nooks whose strangeness gives no shock; the sofa-pillows are brought out to deck a new corner; the old vases, filled with new flowers, have a charm of their own in their familiarity that prosy, stay-at-home porcelain does not know.

All these things, provided that the one person who counts is there too, wearing in Petersburg the little red slippers you bought her that day in Cairo, or with the back of his dear head leaning comfortably, in Palermo, against the pillow you embroidered for him in Christiania. Guy Sacheverel and Pauline Yeoland knew these things, and while they had made Villa Arcadie the home nest into which they dropped after all their flights, they had travelled a great deal in the careless Bohemian way that Pauline in spite of her birth, seemed to understand better than he. His Bohemianism was that of habit, little bourgeois as he had been born; her's was that of the heart and soul.

"The third day of rain, Guy! Can the summer really be gone?"

"It looks that way, dearest. What shall we do?"

"Go somewhere; anywhere, where the sun shines, or where it is a real decent winter, with snow and bells."

And in a day or two off they would go, accompanied by grim Pilgrim and the child, who thus was quite used to strange quarters and *wagon-lits*, and to whom the charm of the unknown and unexpected was as great as it was to her mother.

Monk's Yeoland, with its sober splendour, so strongly contrasted by the dreamy beauty of the ruins, delighted the child.

It was totally unlike anything that she had ever known. She liked the easy-goingness of life in hotels, she liked the plays and opera to which Pauline, feeling carelessly that it was a pity for the child to have no amusement, had sent her with Pilgrim; but it pleased her to be surrounded by perfectly drilled servants, to have a sitting-room of her own, and her bath-room with its gleaming white tiles was a source of never-ending delight to her.

All the things that had rather bored her mother touched in the child a chord that vibrated all through her in its responsiveness.

Even the delicious food had its place in the great whole which went to making her so content. She was frankly *gourmet*, a quality that her father had given her, and Lord Yeoland was much amused by her thoughtful appreciation of his viands and wine.

"Ratty doesn't know claret from ginger-beer," the old man said one day, to which the fat boy replied stoutly, "Yes, I do, grandfather. And I like ginger-beer and loathe claret; nasty inky stuff."

Pam raised her claret-glass and looked at it against the light. "I like it; it is smooth and a little sour, and I feel as if I were drinking rubies," she remarked.

Dick Maxse, who had just come home from a fortnight in town, and looked very seedy, groaned. "There are occasions," he said to his father-in-law, "when claret is the only wine a man can look at."

"Quite so; have some more, Dick!"

Lord Yeoland's eyes twinkled. Maxse was a scamp, a spendthrift and a rake, but he had a saving sense of humour. Pam, on the contrary, looked at the man whom she had been instructed to call uncle, and whom she steadfastly called nothing at all, with the frank disgust that he never failed to bring to her eyes.

He looked up and saw her.

"What are you thinking about, Amelia?" he asked good-humouredly.

"My name is not Amelia, and you know it."

"I beg your pardon. Well, Pamela, of what were you thinking?"

"Of you. I was wondering why your eyes look so—horrid."

"Shut up, Pam, you *are* a cheeky little beggar!" The children sat side by side, and Ratty accompanied his admonition with a sharp kick under the table.

The next moment he had given a short yell, and bent over his plate in pain. "I'll teach you to kick me, you little *canaglia!*" the little girl cried.

Mrs. Maxse was not at luncheon that day, and the two men, both inclined to look on the children in the light of a God-sent amusement for themselves, laughed.

Pam turned to Maxse. "If any one had given me such a knock, my father wouldn't have laughed," she said. "It must have been a fearful blow."

"What would your father have done?"

"He'd have—whacked the person who did it."

Maxse watched her closely; he was interested in her, for in the child he felt the future woman, and she charmed him. He would have given considerably more than he could afford to have had Pam seven or eight years older, for in his way he was a student of human nature.

"Shall I—whack you?"

Luncheon was over and they rose as she spoke.

"If you like; but I suppose you're afraid I'd bite you."

"If you bite me I'll spank you."

He was teasing, but his eyes appealed still to the woman she was going to be. She looked at him. "If you spank me I'll—*kill* you," she said slowly.

For answer, he caught her and kissed her.

She did not struggle, but when he set her down, she flew at him like a wild beast, and with all her force butted him in the stomach, so that he fell against a chair and then to the floor.

"There!" she shrieked. The anger in her small face distorted it, and she was white about the nose and mouth in an alarming way.

Lord Yeoland stood silent for a moment and then said to her sternly, "Go up to your room, Pamela, and stay there until I send for you."

Without a word she obeyed him.

"You may go, Ratty."

Then the old man watched his son-in-law drink a glass of water. "That was quite a blow, Dick."

"A blow, sir! I thought she would have killed me. I—I haven't got my wind back yet."

"Come out on the terrace with me, will you? You're still rather green." For the time being gout was defeated and Lord Yeoland walked as well as any one but for a slight lameness, the result, it was said, of an old bullet.

The two men crossed the black and white stone floor of the hall in silence, and sat down under a big oak outside the door.

"What do you want me to do to her, Dick?"

The old man lit a cigar and leaned back comfortably in his wicker chair.

"Do to her? I don't quite understand." This was true, for Dick Maxse was not vindictive.

"Yes. Shall I spank her, or shut her in her room, or—what? It was *rude*, what she did."

His air of complete detachment from whatever matter chanced to be in hand often puzzled people, and Maxse had even yet not got quite used to it.

"Well," he said ruefully, "I shan't be able to move to-morrow, I daresay. It was a cruel return for a kiss, but I don't want you to punish her. She does hate being kissed, doesn't she?"

"By you at least. I have noticed that she is rather keen on kissing Cazalet."

"Cazzy! Well, I am not a vain man, but——"

Lord Yeoland laughed. "I agree with you, but the fact remains that she does dislike you, so suppose you stop teasing her!"

"Teasing doesn't hurt children," returned Dick, unexpectedly mulish, as often is the way with men of his type. "It cures them of a lot of nonsense."

"That may be, but I don't wish you to tease Pam.

"Well, sir, upon my word I don't quite understand you! ou begin by asking me to name her punishment, and end y—"

"By forbidding you to tease her. Quite so; that is recisely what I have done. The fact is, Maxse, you ouldn't want to tease her (it is a new word for kissing) she were a boy, and you know it. She doesn't know it, ossibly, but she *feels* it, and that is, I think, why she -knocked you down." A faint smile stirred the old an's lips. "To change the subject, how is your horse's ot?"

But Maxse rose and with a spiky answer strolled away.

Lord Yeoland watched him. Maxse's walk was very haracteristic, had a curious stranger chosen to study it. is father-in-law knew the ins and outs of his character, uch as it was, too thoroughly for curiosity, but the springless alk, the hunching shoulders, the movement of the heavy ips, told their story so well that he sighed involuntarily.

He himself had been fast enough in his day; he had rank a good deal, had played, and had loved not wisely ut too often. But there is a well-bred way of wasting ne's life, and Dick had not discovered it. He was as oarse in his pleasures as a stableman, and had not learned the saving grace of looking ill and interesting after a bout; e looked, as Pam had expressed it, simply "horrid."

"Send Miss Pamela to me, Thomas," Lord Yeoland said suddenly to the footman who came to remove the coffee-tray, and a few minutes later Pam stood, very erect, before him.

"Are you not ashamed of yourself?" he asked sternly. The two pair of eyes looked steadily into each othe He had an idea that she was not taking him with sufficien seriousness, and drew his white eyebrows down an frowned at her.

"How could you so far forget yourself?"

"I didn't forget myself. I *won't* be kissed, grandfather, so there's an end of it."

"He is your uncle."

"He is not my uncle."

"He is your aunt's husband, which is the same thing."

"Aunt Rosamund isn't my *real* aunt, is she?"

"Of course she is your real aunt. What on earth do you mean?"

"I mean, mother isn't father's wife, you know, so I thought—" His face softened at her innocent seriousness.

"My dear, do you know that it is very, very sad, that your mother is, as you say, not your father's wife?"

"Sad? I don't think it is exactly *sad*, for they have such a good time together."

"Nevertheless it would be much better if they were married. If they were, your name would be Sacheverel—that is Kennedy, and your mother could come here, and every one would be glad to see her."

Pam suddenly sat down cross-legged on the grass, and rested her chin in her hand. "I know, Pilgrim is always saying such things. But—I don't think married people are happy, do you?"

It was so ludicrous and so pathetic at the same time that the old man did not know what to answer.

"Some married people are very happy."

"But most aren't. Poor Madame de Vaucourt hated her other husband, and had to get a divorce from him; then Aunt Rosamund and—that man—you don't call them happy, do you?"

Her eyes had their most monkey-like expression as she looked at him.

"Well, I don't know; they were very much in love when they were married, or at least——"

Instantly she pounced on the weak point in his statement.

"There! You see! They *used* to be, and now they aren't! Well, just look at mother and father! Why, G.F., they love each other *so!* It is—beautiful."

"So Cazalet said."

There was a long pause. Then the old man sighed. Something had happened, he was not sure what, but his pleasure in the child as a queer little animal, born to amuse him, had gone. For the first time he realised that she had, somewhere, a soul, and that that [illegible] be cultivated.

"Well, my dear," he said, gently laying his delicate hand on her knot of hair. "I have asked Mr. Maxse not to kiss you, and I must also beg you to be civil to him. He is a guest in my house."

"*Oh!*"

She whirled round and stood facing him. "I am sorry. You may tell him that I am very sorry. I will never either scratch or knock him down again." Alas for discipline that at this remark they both burst out laughing.

But when she had run away, he sat a long time, very thoughtful.

CHAPTER IX

LORD YEOLAND had never had a son, and when one had, to her own great surprise, been born to Rosamund Maxse, the old man's joy had been great.

"You must name him, father," his daughter said to him, as he sat by her, holding the red-faced newcomer rather skilfully in his arms, "if you won't have him called after you." And Lord Yeoland had named him.

The Viscount Charles Adrian Joseph de Rattrec had been a friend of his lordship's in their twenties. The two had dwelt together with much satisfaction and a good deal of extravagance in a certain quiet street in Paris which had been less quiet after their advent than before it.

Où sont les neiges d'antan is all very well, but *où est le soleil d'antan* would have been better, for which of us, as he or she grows older, does not dream more of the sunshine than of the snows of yester year?

The golden warmth of the old sun, the hot sweetness it used to draw from the nodding lilac plumes, where are they?

Surely laughter is less merry, tears less spontaneous than of yore. In a word, *où est le soleil d'antan?*

Lord Yeoland named his grandson as much in memory of the old days as in that of his friend, de Rattrec, a bit of sentiment over which he himself who naturally had grown from a charming, slightly cynical young man, to be a charming, slightly cynical old one, half laughed.

Ratty Maxse was a monstrous baby, and speedily grew into a monstrous child. He was dear to his grandfather, but the old man wished he were not quite so overwhelmingly fat. The child was built in bulging curves, his legs were like hams, his cheeks shook like properly made pink jellies. Later, his back view, in knickers, was a temptation to unmerited chastisement.

Pauline and Rosamund having been attractive children, Lord Yeoland watched his grandson with an expectation of sudden development of beauty that was not without its pathetic side. He had had many disappointments, but this rather ludicrous one was not the easiest to bear, for it came at a time when hope, even in a buoyant bosom, begins to quiet down.

It had been a shock to him when Pauline went away, and his conscience, rudimentary as he had kept it through a careful process of constant pruning, had sometimes whispered to him that it might not have happened if he, just when she was growing to womanhood, had not, owing to a very enchanting and engrossing lady not known to court circles, been living almost entirely in London, leaving her at home with her dull sister to amuse herself as best she might.

Misfortunes usually going in flocks, it hardly surprised him when his daughter's elopement had been closely followed by the lady not known to court circles being suddenly brought to see the errors of her ways and marrying a youthful baronet, popularly supposed to be not quite right.

Lord Yeoland was in the early fifties then, and can hardly be blamed for resenting, a year or so after the last sad event, a series of those stiff-necked attacks of gout which warn a man that he might as well stop dyeing his moustache.

His resentment, however, was both invisible and short-lived, for he was too clever to fight against such odds, and realising that he had for years been burning his candle at both ends, handed over his matchbox without a protest, and became, not ungracefully, the old man that his way of living, rather than the number of his years, had made him.

Naturally, when he a few years later, met M. de Rattrec, a well got-up old dandy, with the ogling eye of the old days still ogling but dim, his good stories still told, but grown musty, that silly old ass's airs and graces, had disgusted him. One is so hard on one's cast-off vices!

Young de Rattrec, as has been said, persisted in remaining the least attractive of children, and then in steadily developing into the least attractive of boys, and the old man, who was still in the painful stage of hopeless hope when Pam arrived, a small bundle of wonderful possibilities, turned to her with an eagerness that had long fed on his disappointment in his grandson.

That summer afternoon when Dick Maxse had gone off to sulk, Lord Yeoland sat for nearly an hour turning over and over in his mind all these things.

Pam, as well as being like her all too enchanting father, was really astoundingly like himself, and this is in any child a charm to any relative, quite irrespective of the advisability of such resemblance. Her sudden fit of temper over Maxse's kiss had really delighted the old man, for he knew that had he been in her place he would have done precisely the same thing.

And then he had been, in his careless way, fond and proud of his beautiful daughter, and while it had not only suited his sense of the fitness of things but amused him, to play the inexorable parent to the world, even to Cazalet, it had been, as a matter of fact, only his conviction of Pauline's indifference which had prevented his making the experiment that the old steward had undertaken with such a mixture of sentiments.

So Pam was dear to him for more than one reason, and he realised as he sat there, thinking, under the oak that she had brought him a new interest in life.

Her distinct personality delighted him; she was as thin and quick as Ratty was fat and slow; she was full of dignity and took herself seriously, but her sense of humour was quick and deep.

Her reciting gave him pleasure, though not quite in the way that she intended, for he knew Ravaglia, and recognised her wonderful mimicry of that tragic woman. It had amused him to turn her loose in the library and watch the choice of further recitations that she made.

Some of Swinburne's splendid indecencies were among her favourites, as they would have been among Ravaglia's had the Italian spoken English; and the sharp contrast of the child's thrilling voice, deepened to the amazing travesty of her model's, uttering what he called the purple words, and the innocent pride in her eyes, gave him the most exquisite amusement.

Once, after a recitation behind closed doors to her appreciative and abnormally solemn grandparent, he said to her: "Pam, word of honour not to recite these things to any one but me."

"Not even to Ratty?"

"No! Good heavens, no!"

The child scratched the monkey's head pensively. "Very well, G. F., I promise. Now tell me why?"

The old man was, as he put it to himself, staggered for a moment. Then he decided to tell the truth, a proceeding that he had found as a rule the most politic.

"Well, because, though very beautiful, and as you observed a moment ago, very dramatic, they are not usually the poems that small girls recite. Small girls as a rule recite about—well, about birds, and flowers, and angels—and such things."

Pam nodded.

"I know. Awful rot. I much prefer things I can't understand."

He recalled the absurdly wise expression in her small face as she had said it. How he had enjoyed her! And now—had he got to stop? Must he have her trimmed and pruned?

Another of his amusements had been to take her to the picture gallery and make her use her powers of observation on the portraits of her maternal ancestors. "What do you think of that one?" he would ask, stopping his chair opposite the portrait in question, and watching her as she studied it.

"He looks very kind, but stupid; rather like a priest."

"Are they kind and stupid?"

"They have to be kind, you know. And I don't think many of them are the cleverest of their families."

"And the one above our friend Yellow Waistcoat?"

"He is nicer; more interesting, I mean. I'm sure he had a dimple when he laughed, and he has beautiful hands."

And so it went.

One day she discovered in a corner a small portrait of a man in Cavalier costume, with a long scar on his cheek. "Oh, this one! This one I *love*, G. F. Who was he?" she cried, her hands clasped.

"That's what you must tell me, my dear. You like him?"

"Like him? No. I—If he were alive I should be afraid of him, but—I should adore him. I should love him, really, you know, as mother loves father."

"He was an excellent young man," said Lord Yeoland, watching her closely, "very religious and studious. That lady in the crimson cloak was his wife. They had seventeen children, and it is said that he could say the whole Acts of the Apostles by heart. He used to do so every morning before breakfast."

The child's eyes were fixed on his face, and when he ceased speaking, she burst out angrily. "It is not true; I don't *believe* he was religious and knew things like that by heart. I don't believe that hideous old thing was his wife at all. You are teasing me!"

"Right! I wanted to see whether you'd believe me. Now that you do not, suppose you tell me what you do think about Sir Digby; he happens to be one of the few about whose life I can give you a little information."

Pam stood opposite the picture, the sun streaming in on her back, and splashing over the dark face of the man she was studying.

"I think that he was bad," she said; "really bad, you know. I think he gambled awfully, for heaps of money, and that he drank out of a big silver flagon and got drunk; not sleepy or silly drunk, but the kind when they get angry, and fight. And I think he could sing, rather like father only not so well; and that he loved women very much."

"That one up there in blue really was his wife," put in her hearer casually. "Well, go on—he loved his wife——

"I didn't say he loved his wife. I don't believe," with a sharp glance at the lady in question, "that he did. I said he loved women in general. I think he made love splendidly, you know."

"Dear me!"

Lord Yeoland started, his rubber-tyred wheels silent on the old oak floor. Her diagnosis was startingly correct.

"You are about right. He was much as you say, and the scar came from a duel. But—you have described a very bad man, young woman, do you know it?"

Pam laughed. "I know. He looks bad, but he is interesting, and I love him," she said. "I find most good men so very *dull*, G. F.!"

CHAPTER X

AND now Lord Yeoland had suddenly realised that he could not, for his own peace of mind, go on enjoying his grandchild.

Cazalet had discovered and brought her to Monks' Yeoland with the tiresome purpose of having her brought up and educated.

His lordship had delighted in her, and had drawn her out, with his old lack of all feeling of responsibility in the development of his own children intensified strongly by the facts both of her parentage and her power, in her pristine condition, to amuse him.

Now, by a few words, she had so suddenly shifted him to a new view point that he was almost giddy, and to balance himself mentally caught at that most obvious of supports, the Rector.

There was no help for it. She must be sent to Cunningham. Cunningham would teach her the proper stuff and drill her into the usual mental manœuvres of young English maidens. And—spoil her—he reflected ruefully.

Ratty's tutor, who had been at home, since Pam's arrival, indulging in a long convalescence after an attack of typhoid fever, would soon be back. The old man frowned impatiently.

Bingham could teach Pam some few things, such as how to add a column of figures, how to know a Latin verb from a noun at sight, and how to spell. The old man took it for granted that the child could not spell, no Yeoland could; and to him, whom she charmed, she was all Yeoland. So between Cunningham and young Bingham she would do. It was a great pity, but it evidently had to be.

Evelyn, Ratty's sister, coming across the lawn as he eached this point, saw her grandfather and joined him.

"Grandpapa, have you seeen Pam?" she asked. She was a pretty blonde child with curls and sweet eyes.

Lord Yeoland was not fond of her, for no particular reason, but she was of the type of women that he had all his life designated as "rabbity," and she made him yawn.

"Yes, she was here a moment ago, my dear. I don't know where she went. Did you and Miss Kester have a nice time at the rectory?"

"Yes, thank you, grandpapa. Mrs. Cunningham showed us her postage-stamp album and her school-books. Just fancy, her school-books are all neatly covered with chintz, just as she had them when she was a little girl, and they all have her name written on the first page—'Charlotte Louisa Percy.' Isn't it interesting?"

"Charming. Perfectly charming. I think you will find Pam somewhere in the old garden, my dear."

"Oh, yes. I don't think I'll look for her, though. She makes me do things I oughtn't, Miss Kester says."

Lord Yeoland brightened. "Does she?" he asked briskly. "What kind of things?"

Evelyn was a nice child and had not meant to be a talebearer, so she hesitated and wished she needn't answer.

"What kind of things, I said," insisted the old man sharply, for he wanted to stamp on Evelyn when she dug holes in the grass with her toes in that way.

"I'm sorry I said it, grandpapa—not bad things, you know, only mischievous. Yesterday she made me pick a lot of green winter pears."

"Made you? Why the—why did you do it?"

"She—she made me."

"What could she do to you? How could she make you? Now for God's sake don't cry, I don't mind the pears, I only want to know. How did she make you pick a lot of pears if you didn't want to?"

Evelyn bit her lip, but answered bravely enough: "I don't know how, grandpapa, but she did. She just did!"

"I see. Did she happen to tell you, my dear (you see I am not at all angry!) why she made you?"

"Yes. She wanted to see if she could. She always wants to see whether she can make people do what she wants."

"Ah! And can she, as a rule?"

Evelyn nodded, half proud of her erring relative's power. "Yes, she can. She makes nurse give us jam whenever we want it, and yesterday she wouldn't let Ratty eat one bit of his. Ratty would have cried if he hadn't been so big. And McWhirter cut a lot of gardenias for her the other day."

"Coaxes, does she?"

"Oh no. She just says 'do it' or, 'I wish you to do so at once,' and then they—we—do."

"And what did she do with the gardenias?

"She gave them to Mary Carroway; her baby died, you know."

"That," remarked Lord Yeoland, laughing and rising, "was generous of her at least. Why didn't you remind her that the gardenias happened to belong to me?"

"I did, grandpapa."

"Well? What did she say?"

"She said that she didn't care if they were the queen's, that she wanted them and would have them."

The old man crossed the lawn to the right, and walked slowly down the slope to the path leading to the rectory. It was a great pity. Originality, a most unusual quality in women, seemed to be the child's by right of inheritance, and now he was giving her into the hands of Cunningham who would root it out and leave nothing but a scar in its place. "However," he thought, with a glimmer of hope, "she has a pretty strong will, it appears, and may refuse to be cultivated into the usual monotony."

And indeed Pam did not show any particular love for the process placidly planned by the excellent Cunningham.

Sent to the rectory a few days later in a fresh frock and her second-best hat, she surprised the good man by bringing with her, in lieu of Caliban whom she had been forbidden to take, a small snake which she produced from her pocket and showed the Rector with pride, but a certain suspicious gravity.

"My dear child, how very disgusting! Don't put it on me, I beg of you!"

"Who madel it?" inquired the pupil solemnly, a formula used by Miss Kester when she herself had been found killing snails with her slipper.

"God made it, of course," returned Mr. Cunningham, as was proper, "but He did not mean it for a domestic pet."

Pam returned the little creature to her pocket, which she closed by means of a large safety-pin, and then sitting down, folded her hands and looked up inquiringly.

It was a cool afternoon and the pleasant old drawing-room was agreeably heated by an open fire, before which the master and pupil sat.

"Your grandfather has asked me, my dear Pamela, to have a talk with you, with a view to—*h'm!*—informing myself somewhat as to the amount of religious instruction you have thus far had—*h'm!*"

"I have not had any at all."

The Rector knew this, but it seemed the place for a little kindly horror. When he had done his duty in this respect, he went on. "You are ten, I believe."

"I shall be eleven the fourteenth of November."

"Just so. So we may count that you can be confirmed——"

"I am not going to be confirmed!

"Not going——"

Pam patted her pocket, in which the little snake had begun to give wriggles of impatience, and smiled gravely into Mr. Cunningham's face.

"No. I hope you don't mind?"

"But my dear child——"

"I have never been christened, you see, so it hardly seems worth while."

The Rector rose. He had christened and confirmed Pauline Yeoland; her "fall" had been a severe blow to him, and he had never ceased to pray for her. Now here was her own child telling him that she had not only so far forgotten her dignity as Lord Yeoland's daughter as to run away from home with a married opera singer, but that in the two years that had elapsed before the birth of her child, she had so forgotten his teaching as not even to have that poor little offspring of sin given, in the name of Christ, the only name that could be really hers.

He walked up and down in pained silence for a moment, and then turned. "But, Pamela, you must be christened. I cannot understand——"

"Oh, I was born on a yacht, you know, and then later—well, I suppose they forgot. I really don't mind a bit, though," she added consolingly.

"My poor child." The good man's uninteresting eyes filled with tears, and Pam jumped up and rushing to him caught his hand.

"Oh, please don't! Don't be so sorry. I never cared a pin. They'd have let me be I'm sure, if I had wanted to."

"It's not that, my dear, but that you are so—such—it is so dreadful that you have not been christened."

Her face lightened suddenly, and slipping her hands around his arm, she gave it a little squeeze.

"Oh—now I see. Well—I will be—if you want me to. I'd just as soon as not; I mean christened. So please don't be sorry. I can't bear to have people be sorry!"

"You wish me to christen you!"

"She smiled kindly at him. "Well, as long as you want to, you may. I'm not particularly keen on it, but you may, and whenever you like."

Her air of making a good-natured concession to an unreasonable but favourite child would have convulsed any one possessed of the slightest sense of humour, but a wise Providence had denied the good Rector that very great gift (perhaps because his marriage was already planned in heaven, and Charlotte Louisa Percy was not destined to be a delight to one who did possess it), and he did not even smile.

Pam arranged with him that the ceremony should take place the following Wednesday in the church. It could not be on Tuesday, as she had an engagement.

She did not mention that the engagement was connected with two ferrets and her cousin *à la main gauche* de Rattrec G. Y. Maxse.

CHAPTER XI

Lord Yeoland assisted at Pam's christening with the chastened demeanour of one who realises that his feelings do not fit the occasion. The child's air of good-natured tolerance for an old-fashioned superstition in which many worthy people still believed, almost upset his gravity more than once, but a glance at Cazalet's and good Mr. Cunningham's happy faces steadied it for the time.

Mrs. Maxse, Evelyn, and Ratty were also present, and the ceremony passed off in a manner satisfactory to them all. When it was over and Lord Yeoland had kissed his grandchild's still damp brow, a scurrying noise was heard behind them, and down the aisle scampered Caliban, chattering irascibly.

Pam burst out laughing, and caught him up into her arms.

"Oh you bad boy," she remarked severely, "you have run away again. And he couldn't imagine what Pam was doing here in the cold old church, could he!"

Even Lord Yeoland was a little startled by the every-day sound of her voice in that Sunday environment, and he hurried the little party out into the pale October sunlight.

"Wasn't it lovely, Pam?" asked Evelyn as they turned towards home.

"What? Oh, being christened? Yes, very nice indeed. Oh! I forgot to thank Mr. Cunningham. Wait a minute, Ratty, will you?"

Ratty followed her and reached the vestry door just in time to see her embrace the good man.

"Thank you so much," she said politely, with the effusion of one whose tiresome act of duty is now happily a thing of the past and done with; "it is nice to have a real name."

The Rector's eyes filled with tears. He would have known how to deal with mere ignorance, with obstinacy, or with actual opposition; but this slip of a girl with her tragic eyes and her queenly manner of making him concessions in this little matter that chanced to interest him, foiled him utterly.

So he kissed her, told her that he would pray for her, and sent her off with Ratty, who, very bulbous in a new suit, awaited her outside the door.

"I say Pam, you are a funny one," the boy began with a curiosity that he did not know how to express.

"I am not much like other children, that is true," she returned indifferently. "Pilgrim says it's because I have had such a queer life, but it comes from inside really."

Ratty's interest in and knowledge of his own inside being strictly limited to his stomach, he did not answer.

The two children walked on for a few minutes in silence, and then he began suddenly: "I say, Pam, Bingham is coming back to-morrow."

"Is he?"

"Yes. And lessons will begin. Oh, hang it, how I do hate learning."

"I don't. I like it."

"Wait till he makes you do a lot of nasty Latin into English. He's an awful rotter."

"I'm not going to learn Latin."

"Yes, you are. Grandfather says you are to learn everything with me."

"I won't. I'm going to learn history, and how to write like Evelyn; that's all."

"You'll have to learn whatever grandfather says, Miss Cocksure," retorted the boy.

"Pooh! I'm not his child; nor yours either, Fat Boy, and no one in the world can make me do what I don't want to."

She slung the monkey to her other arm, and Ratty, looking at her in vexed admiration, saw that her red lips were drawn tight in a way very like his grandfather's.

"How do you do it? I mean *not* do what they say? I often try, and I always fail sooner or later."

"Oh, you!" she returned with good-natured contempt. 'You couldn't do it because you care about things."

"Care about things?"

"Yes; about food, and holidays, and presents, and things."

"Well, don't *you* care about 'em?"

She stopped and looked at him. "No. When I want o have my own way the only thing in the world that nterests me is getting it. I don't care if they shut me up, and I forget all about the sweets and things they don't et us have. I only want one thing at a time, and I want t *hard*. That's the way I always get it."

Ratty sighed. "I wish I were like you, but I'm not. I want, or like, such a lot of things at a time."

"I know. So you always give in. It is," she added with a sudden assumption of wisdom, "better for children to obey; every one says so, particularly Pilgrim. Only—it doesn't amuse me to obey."

Ratty maintained a depressed silence for a few minutes; the presence of such undeniable mental superiority in a mere girl, who was his own cousin at that, dispirited him. Then suddenly the cheering thought occurred to him that Lord Yeoland's will was popularly supposed to be fairly strong, and that Pam would probably in the matter of Latin not have quite the walk-over that she anticipated.

"Well, we shall see," he observed, as they came out into the lawn behind the house. "Grandfather told mother that you were to learn everything I do, that's all I know."

Pam did not answer; the subject had ceased to interest her.

That evening as Pilgrim dressed her for dinner, the maid asked whether she had of late had any news from home.

"Oh, yes. I forgot to tell you. They are going to Cannes for Christmas. Mother sent her love to you, and she has a lovely new pale blue dinner gown, and wishes you were there to lace it up. Claire is very nice, but not like Pilly, she says."

Pilgrim's grim face softened. She had been very happy at Monk's Yeoland, for to her surprise she had had a great social success among the servants and villagers, all of them clothing their curiosity regarding "Miss Pauline" in a garment of cordiality towards their old comrade.

It was, of course, perfectly in accordance with the unchangeable dictates of that most interesting mystery that we call human nature, that Pilgrim's society should now be more sought after than in the days before she had eloped with her young mistress and her mistress's lover; but Pilgrim knew little about human nature, and was therefore touched and grateful for not being treated as she had more than half expected, as a pariah.

Thus the months passed pleasantly enough for the maid, and she had grown both more agreeable and slightly rounder, as to shoulders and elbows, in the comfortable atmosphere of her old home.

So only a further reference to the inexplicabilities of human nature can explain the fact that the reference to her mistress's new gown brought with it a sudden rush of the most convincing homesickness for that mistress.

It seemed to her, as she stood with a brush in one hand and Pam's splendid silky hair sweeping over the other, that everything on earth was unbearable; that she must either fly to the outer darkness she had just escaped, and see and touch Pauline Yeoland, or die.

Pam, looking at her little thin shoulders and arms in the glass, raised her eyes and noticed the woman's face.

"Why, Pilgrim! What is the matter?" she cried.

"Nothing, Miss Pam. I am an old fool, that is all," was the answer, as the brush began to sweep steadily through the hair.

"But you are pale—and you are going to cry. *Poor* old Pilly, what is it?"

Then Pilgrim broke down and wept until her nose was as red as fire and her thin lips swollen. "I don't know what it is," she sobbed; "it just came over me—how I want to see her." Pam's arms were close around her neck, so she could not see the child's face.

"Mother! It's mother you want to see! But—you are glad to come, Pilly! And I thought you liked it re so much. Because every one is married, you know, nd you don't feel disgraced!"

"Oh, Pam, don't! I do like it—I mean, I did. But ter all, it is a bit dull, and then—she doesn't care a fig or me; I know that as well as you; but I can't help it. Every one is dull after her."

Pam's eyes grew suddenly monkey-like.

She knew perfectly that her mother's utter forgetfulness of every one and everything on earth beside Guy Sacheverel did not tend to render her a splendid exception from the dulness of the rest of human kind. Pauline was brilliant only in her radiant golden and white beauty. She took no pains to be amusing; her careless good-nature would, had she been plain, not have sufficed to endear her to her servants, and even Pam's share in her affections were, the child herself knew, comparatively small. Many people live to a good old age thinking that those who love many are loved much, but small as she was Pam had learnt the fallacy of this useful belief.

She knew that her mother attracted people quite without making an effort, or even caring a rush about it; she knew that there was in her mother something that drew to her all sorts and conditions of men and women. That this quality is pitifully expressed by the long-suffering world "charm" the child did not know, but she felt its power in her mother, and now seeing the new exposition of it in the unlovely Pilgrim, something seemed suddenly to be drawing her, too, away from Monk's Yeoland, back to the old life.

And for the first time missing her mother and father, she missed them with such violence that she ached all over.

"Don't howl, Pilly dear; you must dress me, you know, or I'll be late for dinner. And—I know what you mean. I've had about enough of this. I think we'll not stay much longer."

Pilgrim blew her nose and then gasped with surprise. "But, Miss Pam—we have come for good! Your mother gave you to 'is lordship."

"Rubbish! Ain't I me? No one can give me away."

"You are to be educated, though, and—and it is much better for you, of course; *that* life is not fit for a young lady."

Pilgrim finished as she spoke, the first of the long plaits that had superseded the topknot as a state coiffure, and slipped the little blue frock over Pam's head.

"I'm not a young lady; don't be nonsensical, Pilgrim. And don't pull my ear off. I tell you what I think. I shall go home soon. I may come back next summer though."

"If you run away, Miss Pam, they won't let you come back," returned Pilgrim severely. She was, as frequently happens, rather startled by the effect of her own words, and showed an amiable desire to eat them.

"Oh, yes, they will." Pam clasped about her collar the string of tiny pearls her grandfather had recently given her, and gave a hasty, uninterested glance at herself in the glass. "My grandfather will always be glad to see me. I amuse him."

CHAPTER XII

Mr. Theodore Bingham, the tutor, rather thin and very brown after his convalescence at the sea-shore, unexpectedly reconciled Pam to a few weeks more of Monks' Yeoland.

He was a well-favoured youth, with what she called specks of gold in his brown eyes, and a pet pipe, very black and disreputable-looking, which he smoked whenever he could escape from the trammels of society for a few moments.

Pam at once told him that she loved him.

"Oh, Pam, how can you!"

Evelyn was genuinely shocked. Although she had no lessons with her brother, she had come to his room on the great occasion of Pam's presentation, half-frightened (for Ratty had told her that there was bound to be a row) and half curious to see how her redoubtable cousin would behave.

Pam's behaviour, she found, left much to be desired.

"Well, I *do* love him, Evelyn, so why shouldn't I say so?"

Ratty laughed. "She won't love him long, Evy. Wait till he begins with her Latin."

Pam, who had brought Caliban, sat down on the floor and looked intently at the tutor's boyish face.

"I shall always love you," she answered; "Ratty doesn't know one thing about me."

"You can't love him until you know him," persisted Evelyn with gentle obstinacy.

"Or until you see how he treats you," added Ratty.

"It doesn't make any difference how long I've known him. Do I love every one I've known a long time? There's——"

She paused, for she could hardly say that a long acquaintance with the children's father had utterly failed to convince her of that volatile gentleman's fascinations. "And it doesn't," she went on, "make any difference what he does to me. If I love him, I love him."

Bingham gave a merry laugh.

"You are a funny little person," he observed, "but I'm glad you love me. I shan't love you, though, unless you are a good girl and learn your lessons."

Pam rose. "I don't care whether you love me or not; that is," she added with slightly bored accuracy, "I'd rather you did, but if you don't it won't make me stop loving you."

"It won't? Well, as long as we seem to be discussing the tender passion, I may observe that as a rule reciprocity is considered rather important as a hostage."

Ratty and Evelyn listened vaguely. The splendid words employed by the tutor impressed them.

Pam shrugged her shoulders and rubbed her cheek to Caliban's.

"'Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds,'" she answered so matter-of-factedly that Bingham at first did not notice that she was quoting. Before he could answer she went on, "Well, I'm going to see Cazzy. Good-bye," and left the room.

The talent for giving our friends an opportunity for gracefully changing their minds, and doing diametrically the opposite of that which they have been swearing to do, is unfortunately a neglected one.

Ratty, had he allowed Pam to follow the dictates of her mind on Wednesday night, might have changed the course of her life, but fortunately or unfortunately he did not, and the next time he saw her, reminded her triumphantly of her vows of Tuesday regarding the Latin lessons.

"What'll you do about the lessons, now that you love him so?" the boy cried, munching his cake, for the interview took place at tea.

"Lessons?"

"The Latin lessons."

"Oh, I shan't care now." Pam was absent-minded, for Cazzy had to her great surprise taken her rather seriously to task for some minor misdemeanour, and she felt that the world could be very bitter.

Ratty gave a laugh, that ended, owing to a misdirected crumb, in a snort. "Ha! Just like a girl. Now that you see what a big chap he is, you're afraid!"

The girl flushed. "I'm not afraid. Tutors don't punish girls."

"Don't they! You wait."

"I shall do just as I like about the Latin. If I do study it, it will be because I like him and want to please him."

The lessons were not to begin, owing to a sudden fit of indulgence on Lord Yeoland's part, until November 1, and during the week before that date, Pam's devotion to Mr. Bingham increased rapidly.

It was to him that she flew whenever she could escape from Ratty, whose fitful adoration, tempered with contempt, bored her unutterably.

She took the tutor to see her favourite places in the park, and the garden; she preached to him in the refectory, using her voice for his benefit with all her skill, sinking to depths and rising to soft heights that thrilled even the rather unemotional spirit of the ex-football champion. And one evening, when it was very damp and misty, she stole away from the school-room and joined him on the terrace where among the ghostly rose-trees he was smoking his evening pipe.

"I love the mist, don't you?" she began, taking his arm.

"Yes—rather. You'll take cold though, Pam; don't you want to put on my cap?"

She laughed. "No. I have too much hair to need a cap. Did you ever see my hair down—I mean loose?"

"No. I say, you'll get a wigging if Mrs. Maxse finds you out here. I ought to send you in."

"I daresay, but you won't," she returned carelessly. "The moon is coming out—oh, look, how lovely!"

And the moon is never more beautiful than when shining through a white autumn mist on brilliant creepers and ghostly yellowing leaves.

But Bingham loved an argument. "How do you know I won't send you in?"

"Because I amuse you."

"Well, what if you do?"

"How curious you are. I mean that you will keep me with you because I amuse you."

"Lots of things amuse me that I don't do, or 'keep with me,'" he persisted, as they turned at the end of the terrace.

"Then you are a goose. I always do, and keep, things I like. Other things are so boresome. Now look!"

Without his noticing it, she had loosened her hair, and now she came in front of him, holding it out at arm's length, with both hands.

"Stand still—there!"

The straggling moonlight fell over her strange little figure, changing her face, making her at once a pathetic mist spirit and a tragic woman. For the first time, Bingham saw her possibilities. The hair in its soft darkness gave to her the air of being a woman who, with loose tresses, looks younger than she is, and it hid the immature lines of her figure.

At first she danced. Waving her arms, crossing them, bending backwards and forwards, kneeling, whirling, she was dancing to charm him, and every movement was full of innocent coquetry. He forgot who she was, that she was a child, that she was an absurd little monkey; for her appeal had reached his imagination and he gazed at her dreamily, in silence.

Then suddenly she stopped and began to recite, in Italian. He did not understand the words, but their meaning was clear. It was, though he did not know it, one of Ravaglia's most celebrated recitations, and given in a wonderfully exact reproduction of the best of the great artist's intonations. But what breathed life into it was the originality of the child's mind which shone through every word and every gesture.

As she reached the climax her voice, hurried and vibrating, broke, and with the one word "Amore" with which Ravaglia had always moved her audiences to frenzy in

Latin countries, and to enthusiasm in England, she sprang forward, her hands held out, her lips parted.

Bingham, hardly knowing what he was doing, caught her in his arms and kissed her.

When he set her down he was red with anger against himself.

"Bravo!" he cried, forcing a laugh. "Very well done indeed. I quite thought we were both on the stage!"

"You—you kissed me," she stammered.

He laughed again. "I did; why not? I have a lot of little sisters about your age. I—I must show you their pictures."

She caught his hand and held it to her breast. "Yes; show them to me. And you *must* love me. Will you? Will you promise? As *much* as you love them?"

"Yes, yes, I promise, if you are a good child," he returned, much relieved.

"I will be good. I will do anything on earth that you want me to," she said, winding her hair into a rope, with a curious circular movement of her head and pinning it on her crown. "Only you must love me *really*, as much as if I were your sister. I always wanted a brother."

"When my sisters are troublesome I give 'em awful wiggings!"

"And you may give *me* wiggings. Oh, I will be *very* good," she cried.

CHAPTER XIII

"I WILL do *anything* but that."

Pam stood in the window, Caliban held tight in her arms.

"But this is the only thing I want."

"I can't. I'll learn Greek, if you like? Greek is much nicer than Latin, and—much *harder*."

"Latin. Your grandfather says that you are to study everything that Ratty does."

There was a pause.

"What is your first name?" inquired Pam suddenly.

"My first name? Theodore. Why?"

"Theodore means Gift of God. I thought you were a gift of God to me, because I have no real brother. But when you torment me, I see that you aren't."

Bingham gave a vexed laugh. "My dear child, I don't want to torment you. If you would just be reasonable——"

"I won't."

"So it seems. Well, I have done my best. I am sorry, but I shall have to tell Lord Yeoland that you refuse to obey him."

"Very well." Her voice sounded a little mournful, but had none of the note of intimidation that the tutor knew in Ratty's at such threats.

"My grandfather will be very much distressed," she added, "and he is an old man."

Bingham nodded gravely. "I know; such shocks are dangerous at his age."

Sorrowfully they looked at each other as if in mournful council over the health of some dear one.

Then suddenly Pam burst into out a peal of such merry laughter that he joined her in a companionable forgetfulness of their position as [illegible] master and refractory pupil.

"It is so funny," she began, "isn't it? Now don't say it isn't, for it is. I mean your trying to make me obey you."

"I don't quite see the fun.

"Why, because the more you insist, the harder it will be for you to give way."

"That's a point of view which had escaped my notice. Doesn't it seem to you that the more *you* insist the harder——"

"No, for I shan't give in. Now I'll go down and talk to my grandfather. I had better break the sad news myself." Her eyes twinkled as she left the room.

Bingham was puzzled. She was uncanny, with her grown-up ways and her very unchildlike sense of humour. However, Lord Yeoland would know how to manage her.

Lord Yeoland, who had had gout rather badly for a couple of days, was not in the blandest of humours, when the child entered his room. She saw it, and sitting down opposite him made conversation for several minutes before springing her mine. She told him of the prospected marriage between one of the under-gardeners and Lucy, the housemaid with the dimple; she waxed eloquent over the new litter of puppies in the stables, and enthusiastic in her account of the last book she had read. Then suddenly, she burst out, "Grandfather, I don't want to learn Latin, please."

"Not learn Latin? Why not?"

"Because—I don't."

The old man looked at her. "Give me your reasons, please," he said testily.

"Ratty says——"

"Never mind what Ratty says. Confound the boy, he grows fatter every day. Answer my question."

"Well, I don't want to because I don't. I can't think of a better reason."

"Nor I of a worse."

"First I said I wouldn't because Ratty said I must, and then when I said I *would*, Ratty——"

"Why did you say you would?"

"Because I liked Mr. Bingham." Caliban, who had a very human understanding and was a sensitive soul, snuggled his small head close under her warm chin as the old man snapped out his question, and the child, stroking the little creature reassuringly, said in her tenderest voice, "Never mind, dear, he won't hurt you; it's only the gout!"

Lord Yeoland grinned ferociously. "*What's* only the gout?"

"Your being cross. You frighten him."

"*Aha!* I beg your pardon, I'm sure; I have no business to visit the sins of my toe on you and Caliban. You were saying that you decided to obey me because you like Mr. Bingham; almost feminine line of reasoning. Go on."

"And then Ratty said it was because I was *afraid*. That I was afraid Mr. Bingham would punish me. That it was because he was so much bigger than I."

"*Hm!*" The old man's good humour was coming back. "Bingham certainly appears to be several sizes larger than you. Well?"

"So, you see, I can't give in and obey Mr. Bingham."

"I don't see that at all, my dear."

"But I cannot let Ratty think I am afraid."

"Why don't you tell him you are not?" His interest grew apace. She was very quaint standing there, a long pig-tail hanging over each shoulder and nearly to the floor, lending a look of almost Egyptian sternness to her small white face, the monkey's, so grotesquely caricaturing her own, pressed to her cheek.

"I really fail to see what Ratty has to do with it."

"The people one lives with always have something to do with it, grandfather."

He laughed. "That is true. Well, so your line of action has been——?"

"I have refused to learn Latin."

"Have you told Bingham?"

"Yes."

"What does he say?"

"He—scolds, and coaxes, and threatens to tell you."

"Which explains your having to come to tell me yourself?"

She looked surprised. "No, I wanted to ask your advice."

"Oh. Well, I advise you to learn Latin. It is—a charming tongue."

"But I don't *want* to! And then Ratty is so disagreeable. He thinks that because he is a boy he must tease me."

"What would happen if you simply said you have changed your mind and decided to—obey me?"

The irony of his suggestion entirely escaped her.

"I can't say that. Don't you see?"

"You can if you want to!"

"Then I don't want to."

Suddenly, without warning, the Yeoland spirit of irresponsibility touched him on the shoulder. The sight of her was so funny; her utter unconsciousness of the overwhelming majority of the forces arrayed against her, so delicious; her conviction of perfect equality with any opponent the fates might bring her, so very pathetic, that he greeted the spirit with a delighted laugh.

"Good. I never could resist a woman. You shall learn no Latin!"

And then with a thoroughly childish joy she flew at him and kissed him gratefully. "Dear G. P. Thank you, thank you so much!"

"What would you have done if I hadn't relented, eh?" he asked as she released him. "You wouldn't have liked being forced to obey?"

She smiled. "Oh, I shouldn't have obeyed; only it would have been very disagreeable for us all."

When he was alone he chuckled several times over the interview, and mentally followed her in her triumphant entry into the school-room.

Her communication, however, was destined to be postponed, for she found the school-room empty, and not until tea-time did Mr. Bingham return thither.

When he did come, it was with Ratty and Evelyn and a pair of fox-terriers whom Pam detested, out of sympathy with Caliban, who gibbered with terror at their approach.

"Oh, please send Nip and Tuck out of the room—they frighten Caliban," she cried, coming forward from the window-seat where she had been watching the sunset.

Ratty laughed. "They have a better right here than that beast of a monkey," he said roughly.

"Ratty! I told you to put them out."

"Nonsense; don't put on airs."

The dogs were now barking excitedly at the palpitating little beast in her arms, and Pam's temper rose.

"Mr. Bingham, tell him he must."

But Bingham had seen Lord Yeoland a few minutes before, and an amused word from the old man as to Pam, had irritated him. He was an easy-going enough youth, as a rule, but he had made a point of making Pam have the Latin lessons, and the fact that a little cajoling on her part had caused his employer to give her her way in direct opposition to his own wishes, had ruffled him.

Now the sight of the victor with the monkey, whom he had never liked, in her arms, brought a frown to his smooth, young brow. "The dogs have a perfect right to be here if Ratty wants them," he said shortly, sitting down.

Pam opened her eyes very wide and stared at him. They had parted friendly enemies, and she could not understand his sudden change of tone.

"Very well," she said slowly. "Then Cal and I will go. Aunt Rosamund will give us tea."

Instinctively she had long since learned that her small presence lightened to the tutor the dulness of his hours with Ratty; as she expressed it to herself she knew that she amused him. Now she would go, and he would be bored. But, being a woman-child, she shot her shaft before going.

"Grandfather says that I need not learn Latin."

Bingham nodded carelessly. Unconsciously he treated her as he would have treated a woman, and his weapon struck her full in the breast.

"I know; he told me. I am sorry, for you would have liked it. Evelyn is going to learn it, aren't you, Evy?"

And tenderly drawing the little girl to him, he kissed her.

Pam stood still, turning white.

"Evelyn! Latin! Pooh—she—cannot!"

Bingham smiled, but his eyes were hard with triumph.

"Can't she? We shall see, shan't we, dear?"

Pam rushed from the room. Jealousy, that fire-clawed demon, tore at her all night. That Bingham shouldn't care about the lessons was bad; that he should teach Evelyn was worse; that he should speak to Evelyn in that voice, and kiss her, was absolutely unbearable.

The child lay awake all night thinking. For her to relent and beg to be forgiven was as impossible as it would have been for her to grow a foot before morning. For her to live on at Monks' Yeoland and see Bingham smile at Evy as he had at dessert was equally out of the question.

There was but one course to take, and she took it unhesitatingly.

She left the house at dawn with Pilgrim, whose own feelings were too evenly divided between distress at going and delight at the prospect of seeing Pauline, to allow her to make any active resistance.

They took the train for London, which they reached by nine o'clock, and went at once on to Dover.

Thus, for the second time, Jane Pilgrim ran away from Respectability and Monks' Yeoland.

PART II

CHAPTER

The tall slim girl who, with a singular grace of shoulders and hips, that seemed to have come unusually early, judging from the undeveloped line of her figure, walked up the steps into the Casino at Aix-les-Bains one evening three years and a half later was Pamela Yeoland, and the elderly woman decently clad in black, with a very smart bonnet, who walked stiffly beside the girl, was Pilgrim. Pilgrim's Progress, as Guy Sacheverel called it, had gone on, since her second flight from Monk's Yeoland, much as might have been expected.

Following the fortunes of her mistress, growing a little grimmer and a little bitterer every day, in her self-elected outlawry, she had gone on wasting the whole love of her heart on the gently indifferent Pauline, and protecting Pam from the slights and unpleasantnesses that the child neither anticipated nor resented when they did come, with a tenderness as thorny as ever was tenderness in this world. Sacheverel was the only one of the trio who appreciated Pilgrim, for Pauline was too careless, and Pam too used to the woman to allow of her almost grotesquely illogical character's appealing to them.

And now that Pam was nearly fifteen, Pilgrim's eager chaperonage of her waxed and increased in a way whose touching side did not escape the handsome ex-singer.

As his daughter and the woman disappeared behind the swinging doors, Sacheverel, who was walking up and down on one of the reading-room verandahs, awaiting Pauline, looked after them, a half smile on his face; and when Pauline came out of the room, some letters in her hand, he said to her, "Pam and Pilgrim have just gone in. Pilgrim is a delicious creature, dearest."

"Pilgrim? She is a good soul, certainly, but—we'd better go, Guy, it's nearly time, and I don't want to miss the serenade."

"But that's just it; she isn't a good creature. She's full of gall and bitterness; she resents with all her heart all the things about which you and I don't care a damn."

Pauline put on her glove and smoothed it daintily. "Pilgrim? Oh, yes, she's cross enough. She nearly jerked all my hair out the day Claire was ill, and Pam didn't come to dinner; you remember."

"Oh, yes! Pam and Marguerite Monsigny! It was funny, in a way."

"Pam had no business to dine with such a creature, but then, she didn't know, poor child. What a rage Pilgrim was in!"

"Pilgrim gave me a most awful wigging. And of course she was right, in a way. Pam is nearly fifteen, and her position is peculiar."

Pauline nodded. "Oh, of course, but still Pilgrim was very impertinent, that day. I'm glad that she devotes herself to Pam; I prefer Claire."

"Well, Pilgrim in the Peace Bonnet is a watch-dog warranted to keep even admiring glances from the greatest beauty on earth. And our Pam, bless her, is hardly that," he added with a good-natured laugh.

They went into the little theatre and sat down in the box Sacheverel had taken for the opera, which was unusually good that year.

"I suppose we really ought to bring Pam with us," he began doubtfully; "there's plenty of room."

Pauline looked at him, her blue eyes tender. "Dear! We should, neither of us, enjoy it *half* as much with her here. And she is perfectly happy with Pilgrim."

"I daresay. She told me the other day," he added laughing again, "that she didn't care to go driving with us; that she hated to feel *de trop*."

Pauline smiled too. Pam amused her, and she was fond of the child, of course, but it was better to have Pam down in the stalls with good Pilgrim.

This feeling Pam quite shared.

“ Pilly, look ! That's the King of Greece. And there's that rich Brazilian. Doesn't he look exactly like a nigger ? And oh, look, there comes Monsigny ! Isn't she glorious ? The King of the Belgians—or was it Prince Belisoff ? gave her the diamonds. I wish I could have a pink gown like that.”

Pilgrim frowned. “ Hush, Miss Pam. Don't stare so at that woman.”

“ But every one stares at her. Almost more than at mother. Isn't mother a dream in that gown ? ”

Poor Pilgrim shuddered at hearing the girl composedly comparing her mother to the notorious Parisian, but she said nothing. It was quite useless to try to convince Pam of things about which she had made up her mind, and having met the beautiful Monsigny through finding and returning a jewelled fan that the “ artiste,” as she called herself, had dropped after a concert, the girl adored the lovely woman, although her father had insisted on limiting the acquaintance, after the dinner, to bowing terms.

The little theatre had filled and was now, at the hour advertised for the beginning of the *Cavalleria Rusticana*, respectfully quiet.

Pam's neighbour, a red-faced Englishman who had been grumbling to the man on his right that his doctor, confound him, had shut down on his Benedictine, subsided into silence, and the conductor raised his baton.

Pam listened, but she was not particularly fond of music, and found the audience more interesting by far than Mascagni's masterpiece.

She had been in Aix for a fortnight, and therefore knew by sight a great many of the celebrities who in that most frivolous of watering-places do congregate.

There was Mimi Lalonde, famous for her beautiful feet and her remarkably bad luck at “ bac ; ” in the next box sat Frau Bendl, the great Wagnerian soprano, looking very commonplace and comfortable in a stuffy red velvet gown and with a gold chain to her eye-glasses ; opposite was Lady

Gower, who had recognised Pauline with a start, and been at such pains to cut her publicly. Lord Gower, a dry old man much like a lizard, would be, Pam knew, in the *salle de jeu* with a crowd of little Frenchwomen chattering around him.

The music went on, and the curtain slid slowly up. Pam gave a glance at the stage. She hated Santuzza, who roared because a man wouldn't marry her, and the only episode in the opera which really pleased the girl was that of Alfio's biting Turiddu's ear. But that would not come for some time; first the very unnaturally clean and merry peasants must trip into church, and the tiresome Santa pray and weep for a half hour at least.

Pam turned unobtrusively in her place and went on with her inspection of the audience.

Her beautiful mother, leaning on the edge of the *loge*, listened with a dreamy contentment. Beside her, Sacheverel's dark face, grown a little heavier in the last years, softened as the beautiful music wore on his senses.

Pam wondered what it was that so stirred them.

And then suddenly her face fell on a man who, standing in the left aisle, leaned against a box and, his arms folded close on his broad breast, was watching her mother.

She had never seen this man; he was very tall and very heavily built though not fat. His clear-cut, slightly reddish face was smooth shaven, and the mouth was at once its most interesting and its handsomest feature.

Something in the cut of his hair and that of his clothes proclaimed him to be English, or at least freshly come from London. He was watching Pauline Yeoland's fair face with an intensity and a disregard of possible observation which forcibly struck the child who in her turn was watching him.

A few minutes later he came slowly down to his seat which was in the aisle, almost facing Pam's, and arranging himself as comfortably as possible in an obviously awkward position, continued his rapt gaze at her mother. His absolute immobility was, though the child did not know it, that of great physical strength joined to sound nerves.

His eyes, she could now see, were reddish-brown and rather prominent. They interested her less than the firm full lips. She had never seen such a mouth; and the perfect flower in the perfect coat, the fit of the large white gloves—these things added in a curious way to his air of being a half-tamed animal.

Her eager mind roused, her vivid imagination burning with thoughts of the man, she was as engrossed as he, and when suddenly, at a great bang of the orchestra, he started and his eyes met hers, his face showed such quick appreciation of her interest, that without awkwardness she continued to look at him, unconsciously turning significantly for an instant to her mother's *loge*.

The big blush that crept over his face made her feel an absurdly motherly sympathy, and her eyes expressed it so distinctly that a half-shrug cut the blush short in its progress, and he smiled at her with the indulgence one shows to an innocently impertinent child.

Pam's pride was hurt; she felt as if some one had slammed a door in her face, and, half to torment him with her superior knowledge of the woman in whom his interest was so transparently keen, she met a smiling nod of her mother's at that moment with such vehement recognition that he turned curiously, and then seeing what had happened, transferred his gaze from the distant and unapproachable mother to the apparently kindly disposed child. Pam was inexorable for a moment, and then the eloquence of his red-brown gaze vanquished her, and she smiled.

Pilgrim, whose eyes were glassy with the unlucky Santa's woes, observed nothing, and Pam continued her study of the big man with the frankness of ignorance and deep interest. She was disposed to be analytical in a small way, of her own thoughts and feelings, but she could not account for the queer charm the man had for her. The hair was wearing away from his forehead; he was quite old from her point of veiw, and his face was red. Yet she longed to know him and to talk to him.

At last Turiddu and Alfio had gone, not to return, and the curtain went down on the scurrying crowd of peasants. The opera was over.

Pam turned to Pilgrim. "Pilly, mother wants me;

I'll go up to the box. You stay here and then meet me by the door when it's over."

"I'll come with you, Miss Pam."

"You won't. Your eyes are all bunged up—you're fright. I know the way. Good-bye."

Slipping past the indignant servant who, in spite of herself did not dare follow her, the girl sped up the aisle and came out into the crowded *foyer*. When she had reached the door of her father's *loge* she paused and turned. As she had known by some instinct, the big man was behind her, dwarfing all the others with his bulky height.

"Mother, I'm going home," she said, entering the box. 'I'm tired, and I hate 'Paillasse!' "

Pauline turned. "Very well, dear. Where's Pilgrim? Isn't that she still in her place?"

"Yes. She has a few tears left and wants to shed them over that tiresome clown. I'll go through the garden and take a *fiacre*. It's early."

Her mother nodded. "Go quickly, then, dear. You should have brought her."

Three minutes later, the child stood under a tree in a secluded part of the garden, breathing hard as she watched the big man hurry along towards her.

"You speak English?" he began abruptly.

She laughed. "I am English."

"Thank God. I don't know a word of French—" He hesitated, visibly seeking for words. She looked very young out here, with her long pig-tails hanging over her shoulders and her skirt well above her ankles.

But a malicious demon of mischief laughed at him out of her dark eyes and gave him courage.

"Look here," he began abruptly, "there's no use beating about the bush—who is she?"

"The lady in black in the box?"

"Yes—of course."

"You appear to admire her."

"I do admire her."

"She is certainly very pretty."

He flushed as he had in the theatre. "Yes. You know her; tell me her name."

Pam laughed. "Why should I ?"

"You meant to when you let me follow you out here."

"You don't know what I meant. And no more do I," she added half under her breath.

"I do. You're too young to have been just making a fool of me, aren't you ?"

"Depends on what you call making a fool of you. I do know her and I saw that you admired her."

"Tell me her name."

His accent was not that of an Englishman, and his curt way of speech was also that of a newer civilisation.

"Excuse me, but are you an American ?" asked Pam.

"No; I'm an Australian—Charnley Burke of Victoria, if you want my name and address."

There was a short silence while the strains of Pagliacci's entry into the village reached them from afar.

Then Pam went on, enjoying her power, vicarious though it was, of reducing this big, and evidently, at least in his own opinion, important person to the humiliation of begging for the information he longed for.

"You admire the lady, and you want to know her name ?"

"Yes."

"And when you know it, what will you do ?"

"That depends. If she is English, as I hope and believe, I shall ask some one to introduce me to her."

"I see. Well, her name is Pauline Yeoland."

"Ah. And the man with her is her husband ?" He spoke with suppressed intensity, his big voice a little hoarse.

"No; she has no husband.'

"What! Unmarried ? Or a widow ?" The joy in his voice urged her to mercifully end his delusion.

"Unmarried, and——"

"The man—who is he ?"

"Guy Sachevere!."

He frowned. "He used to sing, didn't he ? Is she engaged to him ? They were alone."

Pam understood now. He had fallen in love with her mother! She gave a little shiver of delight.

"No, they are not engaged. She—they live together."

He stared for a second and then burst into a hoarse, ugly laugh.

"So she's another of *them!* It seems there is nothing else here. I knew the others were, but she—*I* thought she was good."

His face was dark with anger and disappointment. Pam was desperately sorry for him.

"Don't!" she urged, clasping his arm, which felt as hard as iron under the soft broadcloth; "she *is* good. She is an angel. You see, they couldn't do anything else. He has a wife, a perfectly horrid person."

Charnley Burke looked down at her as if he had never seen her before. "I see. Well, have I amused you? Go and tell your angel—that a fool from Australia adored her for an hour, and dreamed, actually, of marrying her! Love at first sight," he added to himself, but aloud, "and with *one of them*, by God!"

Although she did not understand what he meant, the girl blazed at the sound of his voice, and drew away from him with a quick movement.

"Don't you dare say things about her," she cried furiously; "she's my mother!"

Then she was gone, and Burke stood staring after her.

CHAPTER II

But for one of those chances which are at once so remarkable and so common, Pam and Charnley Burke would never have met again.

The Australian, after a much troubled night, decided to leave Aix at once, as staying on and again seeing Pauline could only increase his misery. At first, in his angry disillusion, he had made up his mind to arrange a meeting with the woman whose beauty had had such a tremendous effect on his imagination, and then try issue with the man whose back he had seen in the *loge*.

"He was lucky, why shouldn't I be?" Burke asked himself. He was rich, perfectly free, and nearly forty years of varied experience had taught him that something in his very vital personality was attractive to most women. He had, as he recognised with the primitive frankness peculiar to him, fallen seriously in love now, for the first time since his boyhood; and the longer he paced his room that night, Pauline's lovely face distinct in his memory, the stronger his love grew.

But since Pam's announcement to him and his brutal interpretation of her childish words, his love had changed its character. During that hour in the theatre the man would have been willing to kneel before Pauline as to a goddess; in his heart, he did kneel to her. All the best in his nature was called out by her, and it came very near, as sometimes happens with men of his stamp, to being adoration.

Then, by the irony of fate, the woman's own child had dragged her down from the altar built by the man's imagination, and as day came in at his windows and he still paced up and down in his evening-dress, he laughed at his own folly, and mentally bespattered his shattered idol with mud she deserved no more than she had deserved the incense of the night before.

He would stay; he would meet her, and what has been can always be again.

Later, however, when a bath and breakfast had somewhat restored his mental balance, he changed his mind.

He would go at once, and forget all about the woman. There was no sense in tempting fate to such an extent, and what, after all, was he, to dare enter the lists with a man who, to judge by the splendour of the woman who loved him, must be splendid himself?

Thus from a mixture of motives, some worthy, some unworthy, the Australian decided to leave town at once, and a little pale and worn by his vigil, ordered his bill and went out for a stroll to pass the time until the Paris express left. Turning naturally into the Casino garden, he wandered about until, observing a crowd gathered about a man who was photographing the terrace, he half unconsciously joined the onlookers, and stood absently watching the preparations.

Suddenly he saw a young woman, who was just in front of him, look around with a keen glance, and then with great skill slip her hand into the pocket of the man to her left.

When the hand came out, it held a small pocket book. Burke watched her with some interest as with a cool "pardon, m'sieu," she forced her victim to make way for her, and then sauntered carelessly away towards the nearest exit from the grounds. Burke's great red hand was cruelly strong as it closed on the small one of the thief a moment later.

She threw him a terrified look, and burst into tears and a flood of words simultaneously.

"I can't understand a word of all that, but I want the pocket-book," he repeated doggedly, and when he at length augmented his formula by the word "gendarmes," she handed him the purse and flew away, wiping her eyes with a due regard for her complexion.

Regretting that he had not had time to give her, out of pity, something from his own pocket, Burke went back to look for the owner of his booty.

The man, who had left the group about the photographer, and was making his way up the steps, was easily overtaken.

"I beg your pardon, this is your purse," began the Australian abruptly.

Sacheverel, for it was he, stared, and then felt in his empty pocket.

"Thanks very much. Did I drop it?"

"No; a young woman took it, and I took it from the young woman."

After a short pause, during which the two men eyed each other curiously, Sacheverel said, "Surely I know you?"

"I think not. And yet, I seem to know your face. I was in London in '80."

"And so was I."

"62 Barbury Street, Russell Square—Mrs. Grubb's."

"Right! Webster?"

"Johnson? Kennedy?"

"Burke, by Jove, Charnley Burke! Well, upon my word! How are you, and where have you been ever since?"

"George Kennedy! Back in Australia, most of the time. For God's sake come and have a drink, I'm half dead of loneliness."

A few minutes later, when they had celebrated their meeting, and Burke was on the point of returning to his hotel to announce his intention of staying on for a few days, Sacheverel remarked, "By the way, I forgot to tell you that when I went on the stage—you knew, didn't you, that I did go on the stage?—I changed my name. You have heard, probably, of Guy Sacheverel," he added simply.

Burke started, and there was a short pause.

"You are Guy Sacheverel! Then it was you—I heard you once, as Romeo, in Melbourne," he went on with a loud laugh, "and wondered all the evening who the deuce you reminded me of!"

His face had grown a shade redder in his embarrassment.

So it was George Kennedy's back at which he had gazed last night, and it was George Kennedy,—"I saw you last night at the opera," he went on abruptly, "at *Cavalleria Rusticana*."

Sacheverel nodded, seeing Burke's confusion. The situation held nothing new, and hence nothing awkward for him. He and Burke had for a short time been pretty close friends years ago, and nothing now seemed more natural to him than to go on, as they walked out into the sun: "Yes, we have a little villa here, on the Chambéry Road. I see you know the—the turn my life has taken. You will think me very fortunate when you have met Pauline. Dine with us to-morrow!"

And that was all.

Burke's heart when he got out of his *fiacre* the next evening, and pulled the rusty bell-wire of the Villa Orchidée, beat loudly in his great breast.

He had even yet not quite got his bearings regarding the woman with whom he had fallen so violently in love, and George Kennedy. The one surprise had followed so closely on the other, bringing his bitter disdain of the woman who had disappointed him to so sudden a halt, that his brain still whirled.

Sacheverel's manner had revealed much to the not unobservant Australian, but he had not yet had time to completely readjust his ideas about Pauline Yeoland.

The thought of Pam, also, not unnaturally troubled him. If the child had told her adventure, the consequences were bound to be more or less unpleasant.

All these things whirled through his mind as he stood waiting for an answer to his ring, and then, as the door opened, admitting him to a little green garden at the far end of which Pauline in a white gown was standing with Sacheverel, Burke suddenly knew that Pam had not told, and would not tell. "It would cut both ways," he reflected hurriedly as he went up the path. "It was a hideous thing for a child to do."

And he was right; Pam had not told.

When a few minutes later the little party of three went into the house on the announcement of dinner, the rose from a deep chair in which she had been curled, reading, and coming forward, acknowledged her father's introduction of Burke with a calm indifference that amused him to the point of a vehement regret that no one was present who could share the joke with him.

The dinner was a charming one, served in a rather bare room with faded frescoes on the ceiling and walls. Three long windows opened to the greenness of the garden; flowers were banked on tables between the windows and gracefully massed on the dining-table; the light, well-cooked meal was perfectly served; and Pauline more beautiful even, with her bare arms and shoulders, than he had pictured her.

The man was too much in love to realise as yet anything but the supreme fact of being with the woman he loved, and, carried to the seventh heaven by that fact, he outdid himself in clever talk and well-told anecdotes.

Finding that his entertainers knew of and cared for so-called society topics as little as he himself, that Pauline's share in the conversation was a very small one, and that Sacheverel was interested in hearing about the changes that had taken place in Australia since his visit there years ago, Burke turned with relief to the subject he knew and loved best—life in that country.

Owning himself vast tracts of grazing land, and having made his money in the old-fashioned story-book way, by raising cattle and by finding gold, he told the story succinctly and well.

His strange accent, the occasional dialect words he used, the light in his big, prominent eyes, contrasting so strangely with the strong repose of his huge figure—all these things charmed Pam, who ate hardly any dinner as she sat watching her *vis-à-vis*.

Once only she interrupted. He had told of a strike among his employees, and how on being fired at by the leader, he had turned and shot him down where he stood.

"Did he die?" the child asked breathlessly.

Burke laughed. "Yes, when I shoot a man he dies."

He was clothed as all men were clothed, he was educated as well as many, he was a millionaire colonist in Europe on a vacation, he played baccarat, and passed his time as other men did. But he was, if not a savage, still a primitive, and something in him appealed strongly to a hitherto unstirred instinct in the child. It was the instinct common to all women who have the necessary temperament and charm to influence men, to study and experiment with the man who, for the moment at least, interests them.

"I wish," the child thought, peeling an almond deftly with her long brown fingers, "that it was *me* he was in love with."

There was in her mind, perfectly childish as yet in her lack of understanding of the meaning of the strange things she knew, no morbid idea of being herself in love with Burke. It was merely that she realised his difference from most men, and that his great strength, and something in his eyes, impressed her all unconsciously with a desire to know him better. Pauline listened with sweet careless interest to the stories Burke told. She rather enjoyed him, but that was as far as she ever got with any one.

Pilgrim's insight was not at fault when that unfortunate victim of a social system told Cazalet that Pauline loved Sacheverel so completely that she hardly even noticed the people who worshipped her. For Burke was by no means the first man who had allowed himself the luxury of falling in love with Sacheverel's mistress. It is probable, too, that travelling about as they did, and meeting all sorts of men, and of all nations, more than one of them might have tried to win her from Sacheverel, had not her perfectly unaffected disregard of their sighs and hints convinced them that such an attempt would have been as laughable as to seriously make love to the moon.

So when Pauline handed the big Australian his coffee a little later in the garden and her hand touched his, his start and flush were noticed not by herself, nor yet by Sacheverel, but by Pam, who stood, her monkey in her arms, under a lime-tree by her father.

The unobservant are usually looked on by those who observe them more or less in the light of children, so Pam's motherly feelings as she turned from Pauline's blindness to flash a look that weighed between sympathy and amusement, at Burke, was not unusual in itself.

When the child had withdrawn unobtrusively, and gone into the house, Burke drew a sigh of relief. Her deep dark eyes were too keen for him to be comfortable under their gaze, and he preferred not to have them fixed on him.

The evening passed pleasantly enough, and proved but the first of many such.

Occasionally they were varied by Sacheverel and Pauline, and once in a while Pam as well, dining at the Casino with Burke, but the Australian preferred the quiet meetings at the Villa, for the curiosity of those who did not know the history of the beautiful woman, with her unmistakable air of breeding, was almost as offensive to him as were the ostentatious cuts of her old acquaintances and the free and easy admiration of the men who saw in her merely one of a class to which her manners were superior.

Her own utter indifference to all the several kinds of attention to which she was subjected puzzled the Australian at first, but as time went on and he found himself continually forgetting that she was not Sacheverel's wife, he began to take it for granted almost as much as she did.

Sacheverel's attitude, however, remained a mystery to him, until one day the ex-opera-singer explained it to him in a casual phrase evoked by a vivid monosyllable on Burke's part regarding the insolent staring of a Frenchman obviously of the *rastaquouère* class.

"I can't pull his nose and fight him, can I?" Sacheverel returned. "And if I could what good would it do? The fact that she is not my wife is all that those beggars can see, and that can't be denied. You can see for yourself that we are the happiest man and woman in the world, and for our great happiness that kind of thing, which is the price we pay, is a very modest price." And Burke began to understand.

Pam bored him. She was too clever to venture to try to sound him about his feelings, but she watched him with a clear unfaltering gaze that got on his nerves, and more than once made him frown savagely at her.

Only once she spoke to him about her mother, and that one time it was he who created the opportunity by asking, "Well, what do you think of me?"

Quick to seize the chance she returned, "I think of you?"

"Yes. You stare at me like a confounded little Hindoo idol; I suppose you're thinking of me."

She smiled at the tone of his voice. "I'm sorry to have made you cross. I was only wondering whether you are still in love with my mother."

The blood rushed to his face. "And what conclusion have you come to?"

"I think," she returned, "that you are."

CHAPTER III

Two years had passed by; Burke had spent a winter in Paris, and one in Italy, stopping two or three times at Villa Arcadie, and passing the first of the summers yachting about Norway, with Sacheverell and Pauline as his guests, and now, the second summer, they were all back at Aix.

Burke had amused himself in Paris and in Rome; he was no romanticist to fly all the attainable pleasures for the sake of the far-off and unattainable good. He had lived comfortably, and at the modern automobile rate; he had learnt that there are few things, whatever moralists may say, that money cannot bring to a healthy man who is still young, and in consequence of his long years passed in comparative solitude, he was not *blasé*. So his doings were chronicled as those of a distinctly gay bachelor, and tales were told which need not be repeated here.

These things, however, did not alter the fact that he still loved Pauline, though time had cooled the fire of that love. At any time he would have done anything in the world for her, though he had never put the fact into words either to himself or to her.

He had come from London that morning, and as he walked along the shady road towards the villa, perfectly dressed as usual, and in some indefinable way looking more civilised than of old, he realised that his joy in seeing her had lost its old vibrant quality, and gained a delightful note of peacefulness. Antonio, now putting on a little flesh, and in a new livery, opened the door and greeted him with all the cordiality of an Italian who has served long enough in a family to feel himself an integral part of it.

The garden was trim and bright with flowers; new awnings shaded the windows, and under the lime-tree stood several comfortable-looking basket chairs and a table.

"La Signora is out," the servant told him with a sympathetic gesture, "and il signore; but the signorina is there, under the tree."

Burke went slowly over the grass towards the lime-tree. He had not seen Pam for over a year, as she had been ill on the occasion of his last visit to Villa Arcadie, and he was not particularly desirous of seeing her now. However, there she was.

She was reading, her head leaning against a yellow linen pillow, and on hearing his approach, looked up leisurely.

When she recognised him, however, she dropped her book and rose quickly.

"You! I *am* glad to see you," she cried shaking hands with him. "Come and sit down in the shade. Father and mother are off somewhere, as usual."

He sat down and threw his hat on the grass.

"You've changed," he began suddenly.

"Haven't I? How do you like my hair?"

There was not the slightest coquetry in her manner as she turned and presented to him a back view of her small head, which was completely covered with a net-work of broad flat plaits.

"By Jove! It's famous. How old are you, Pam?"

"Nearly seventeen. Long skirts, you see. It's great fun. It amuses mother and father almost to death. Imagine those two—turtle-doves—with a grown daughter!"

Burke nodded. "It does seem rather a joke. Are they both well?"

"They are always well, you know. Father is growing a little bald, poor dear—and so are you! *Poor* old gentlemen!"

Burke felt a slight twinge of irritation. "Your father is four years older than I."

"I know. That makes you forty. Are you going to be here all summer?"

"I don't know. It depends chiefly on *them*. The yacht is in commission——"

"I never think of the yacht without cursing you," the girl returned laughing. "It was horrid of you to make me stay at Blankenbergh that summer. How I hated it; and what a life I led poor Pilly! I don't see how you had the heart to not ask us!"

"I didn't want you, my dear. Children are sometimes a nuisance."

"Oh, I was, of course, I know. Only I had been very square to you about a certain incident, and I do think I deserved some recompense."

It was the first time she had really directly referred to their first conversation together.

"Nonsense—you'd have caught it if you *had* told."

"If I had wished to tell, you don't suppose I'd have minded 'catching it?' One has only to choose the lesser evil, or rather the greater pleasure, and let everything else go!"

"That's true," he returned, struck by the philosophy of her observation, "but they'd have been awfully angry with you."

"And with *you?*"

Her eyes were solemn but her tone quizzical.

"Ancient history, all that. And I'm not the first man, I'm sure, to whom the same thing has happened."

"Of course not; but you are the only one who has had the advantage of getting his information straight from one of the family. Well, I'll not bore you; I am an exceedingly amiable young person!"

"Are you? I doubt it."

"I am, though. By the way, guess who is here? In Aix, I mean?"

Burke had no idea and said so.

"My aunt, Mrs. Maxse, and my cousin Ratty. You have heard of them? I saw them yesterday."

"No!"

"Yes. Poor Aunt Rosamund was very kind to me. I am going to have tea with her to-morrow. They are at the 'Splendide.'"

"Has your mother seen her?" asked Burke.

"Oh, no. Mother wouldn't; she has—" The girl paused and then went on with a little smile—"cast off her family, you know."

"But I should think she would like to see her only sister," insisted the man gently, for in his mind an ideal woman must love her sister. Pam looked at him, her eyes suddenly full of the old monkey-look as the sun shone into their dark depths. "Do you remember the woman in the Bible? 'Whither thou goest I will go; and where thou lodgest I will lodge, and thy people shall be my people'; that always reminds me of mother. Now that I am older, you understand? And that is why she does not care to see Aunt Rosamund."

"But it is unjust; it is cruel. You know that for me there is no one on earth like your mother," Burke went on earnestly, "but still, according to the laws of society, she did wrong; and if your aunt can forget that, and forgive her—"

"Mother ought to be grateful and kiss her hand! But you see, mother does not think that she did wrong, and she does not feel grateful! Oh, let's talk about something else!"

Burke nodded, half relieved to get back out of the *impasse* whither her unexpected raid into the realms of Scripture had led him, and half curious to hear more of her opinion on the subject.

"Of course she did give up a great deal; everything that makes a woman's life pleasant."

"Rubbish, Mr. Burke! There is only one thing that makes a woman's life happy, and that is the thing she took. And having taken it, and found it better than all the rest put together, would you have her pretend to be sorry? As if a minute with father wasn't worth a million years with poor Aunt Rosamund."

She had risen in her vehemence, and he saw how she had grown, and how the lines of her figure had softened and improved.

As he looked at her some one came up to them, unseen by both until close at hand.

"What's that about a million years with mother?"

Pam turned. "Ratty! You here! Just like you to come creeping on one like that. Mr. Burke, my cousin de Rattric Maxse."

Pam sat down again with youthful suddenness as she spoke, and emptied the next chair of its books and papers.

"Sit down, Ratty. How's Aunt Rosamund to-day?"

"Pretty fit. I say, Pam, this is a jolly little bungalow you've got here." Ratty looked round with an approval not altogether innocent of patronage. He was a fat youth with soft dimpled hands and a budding moustache.

Pam laughed. "Nothing like Monks' Yeoland, but not bad for people in a small way. Will you have some tea? I wonder what time it is!"

It was nearly five as two watches simultaneously proved.

"Ratty, if you'll go in at that window to the right of the door and ring the bell on the left of the sideboard, some one will come."

The young man obeyed, and a few minutes later Pam was pouring tea in a casual way that had in it something of boyishness and was rather attractive.

"We won't wait for father and mother," she observed, pouring hot water into the pot; "they expected to be back for tea, but that is not saying that they will turn up for dinner even—as you know," she added to Burke. "Are you going to the play to-night?"

"I don't know; are you?"

"Of course, Madame Ravaglia is staying with us, did I not tell you?"

"Ravaglia? *Here!*"

Ratty's utterance was somewhat impeded by bread-and-butter, but bread-and-butter could not conceal the horror in his voice, and his eyes bulged eloquently.

"Ravaglia! Here! If you are afraid of meeting her you had better trek, my dear boy, for she *might* come out for some tea, though I doubt it." Pam smiled at him and her amusement was genuine.

"But—hang it, Pam, you know as well as I do that—or rather I suppose you don't know," he added pompously. "*Men* hear such things more than girls."

"Nonsense! Of course I know. And not a button do I care. I *love* Madame Ravaglia."

The fat boy rose. "Well, upon my word, I should think, my aunt,—" he began angrily, but she interrupted him with authority.

"Don't be absurd, Ratty. And remember you are in the house, or rather in the garden, of people who dare to do as they choose. We are not afraid of a great artist's reputation."

"Afraid? Who is? Only there is such a thing as propriety, and there is another called impropriety; and for a young girl of your age——"

Pam looked at him with a curious expression in her eyes.

"You forget that I am not an ordinary young girl. My parents are not married, and there is no regular, ready-made position for me in the world, so I shall, thank God, be able to make my own position. So either go home and keep mum about where you've been, or else sit down and drink your tea like a sensible boy."

Burke had listened so surprised as to be almost aghast. On the rare occasions when he had thought of Pam, he had taken it for granted that her childish eyes would one day be violently opened; that a casual word or some direct unkindness would teach her with cruel suddenness the truth she had just so clearly put before her lubberly young cousin.

And now the calm unconcern with which she had stated the case showed him that the process had most mercifully been made a gradual one; that her father and mother, too engrossed in each other to take any definite course regarding her, had unwittingly done the wisest thing by leaving nothing to surprise her. Having known all her life that her parents stood to each other in unusual relation, but soothed always by the spectacle of their perfect happiness, the young girl now found herself looking at life from the one view-point whence it could to her look calm and tranquil.

The big man heaved a sigh of surprised relief.

Pam's small face was full of a strange dignity, for she faced the world not as a suppliant, nor as an enemy, but rather as a sincere, self-respecting atheist faces those who believe in the God he has forsaken. She and the world disagreed, but politely, without bitterness, for she felt none of that inferiority which engenders hatred.

Ratty watched her for a moment in dumb indignation. "It's a great shame they aren't married, then," he burst out at length, setting down his cup and brushing a crumb from his skin-tight waistcoat.

Burke gave an angry start, but to his surprise Pam burst into a merry laugh. "Just go and bowstring the obstacle, will you, then? Pilly always calls her the Obstacle!"

CHAPTER IV

THERE is a certain road leading into the mountains from Aix that winds slowly up through very beautiful scenery, clinging to the rocky hill as if shrinking from the steep slope on the other side, until at length it makes a loop through a wall of solid stone and ends in a small round platform from which is to be had the finest view in the country-side, save one to be reached only by a funicular.

One afternoon about a week after the conversation recorded in the last chapter, Pam and Charnley Burke were sitting on the stone wall that edges the belvidere, looking down at the purple and golden panorama spread before them.

"Ripping view, isn't it?" the girl asked, mechanically taking off her hat and dropping it with safety behind her.

"Corking! Do you come up here often? It's rather a pull, you know."

"For fat people, yes, and you are putting on a bit of flesh," she returned, with a critical glance at his admirably got-up figure. "Pilly and I are lean kine, so we don't mind."

"Pilly! You don't mean to say you drag that unfortunate female all these miles, Pam? I call that brutal."

"It is rather, but I have to walk, you see, and I've got no one else. When we get here, she sits down on the bench with her back to all this," jerking her head towards the view, "and plays patience. It's a sweet sight."

Burke burst out laughing. "And you, you little devil, sit and laugh at her!"

"I don't mind a bit being called a 'little devil'—it's really rather nice, you know, though I'm sure I've no idea *why*—and you *do* mind being called fat. So try again!"

She looked at him solemnly, swinging her feet as she spoke.

"I could make you angry in a moment if I chose," he answered, wiping the moisture from his rather bare temples with a smart blue and white handkerchief.

"Then do."

"Well, do you happen to know that you look a good deal like Caliban at times?"

She stopped swinging her feet and reflected for a moment. "Yes, I know I do. Cally has very fine eyes, don't you think so?" She raised her own, golden in the strong sunlight to his as she spoke, sombre and weary in expression.

"Fine eyes! You are a limb. Well, yes, I must admit that much, I suppose."

"But you mean we have no colour and no dimples. That's true. Only I don't think Cal would look well with pink cheeks and dimples, do you?"

Then she burst out laughing. "*Aren't* I silly? But you know,—or rather you *don't* know, that it is quite impossible to hurt my feelings about my looks. I know I'm plain."

He rose and came to her, his hands in his pockets. It had suddenly come home to him that she would not only be much less attractive with the pink cheeks and other adornments in question, but also that she was very nearly grown up.

"Plain, are you? Well, yes, I suppose you are," he said slowly, studying her cool little brown face with his prominent eyes. "I don't think, however, that it's going to matter much."

"Matter! No, of course not."

She spoke with so much earnestness that though she was obviously far away from him mentally, he went on with a delightful sense of beginning an exploration in a totally undiscovered country. "How do you mean 'of course not'?"

"I mean just what you said. Looks don't much matter. I mean beauty doesn't."

"Most people think that they matter more than anything else, my dear."

"'Most people are donkeys.'"

Burke sat down by her. "You are speaking, I take it, of looks in relation to one's—a woman's success in life?"

"Yes."

"Well, how do you know then that they don't matter?"

She turned, staring at him as if he had just come. "Oh, dear me, what on earth are you gibbering about? I only meant that *will* is what does things."

"Will?"

"Yes," she hurried on impatiently. "Success is surely having one's own way, isn't it? Well, any one with will enough can do anything. If she hasn't white eye-lashes."

"Eye-lashes! My dear Pam, what a jump from abstract thoughts on will-power!"

"Well, it does count. You know you like me better, to use the nearest illustration, than if I had watery, greenery, grey eyes and stumpy white eye-lashes. Don't you?"

"I *do*, but——"

"There isn't any but. You either do or you don't. And when I look at you hard you forget that I look like a monkey, don't you?"

Before he could answer she went on. "Now, let's talk about something else. I hate long-drawn-out discussions."

"As your eye-lashes are neither stumpy nor white, I perforce obey. What shall I talk about, She Who Must be Obeyed?"

The girl turned and looked at him curiously. He had never before spoken to her as to a grown woman, and she recognised, while she could not explain, the difference.

"For God's sake let us sit upon the ground and tell sad stories of the deaths of kings."

He stared, and she burst out laughing.

"You are a badly educated person, Mr. Charnley Burke of our loyal colony, Australia! Thought I was being original, didn't you?"

"I did—but I suppose it is Shakespeare? As a subject of conversation, how will this do? Your graceful young cousin is in love with you."

"Oh—Ratty and Love! Such a great fat, tubby boy. Isn't it loathsome of him? Of course he was bound to do it, you know," she went on without the slightest embarrassment, "Boys always do with the one person they oughtn't. Imagine Aunt Rosamund's feelings! I saw it coming the first day I had tea with them in the Splendide gardens; he was so absurd. Poor Aunt Rosamund was dreadfully upset until I told her that wild horses couldn't drag me to marry a man with hands like bath buns."

"The deuce! You didn't say that?"

"But I did. And she was so relieved, poor dear, that she quite forgot to be angry. Since I've refused to see him at all, she is consoled and thinks me the nicest person in the world. Which I am," she added blandly, looking up with a smile from her work of scratching some moss off a stone with her hat-pin. "She wrote my grandfather that I was much improved. I wonder what she would have said if I had appreciated Ratty's charms!"

"Probably that you were a designing little wretch. Pam, have they said anything more about Ravaglia?"

"Said anything? Well, I should rather think they had. I had a long letter from my grandfather the other day, urging me to 'drop her.' Imagine me dropping Gemma Ravaglia!"

"There's something in it, though, my good child."

"Oh, come now; *you too!* That would be too much. You know that she is the greatest genius of the century, and that I adore her."

"I know. At the same time, if you were my daughter——

Pam rose and picked up her hat. "Which, thank heaven, I am not. Let's go, shall we? We are dining with you, aren't we?"

"Yes." Burke said no more, for he had no wish to make himself so disagreeable that he would be expelled from the undiscovered country just within whose boundary he had to-day penetrated. They walked home rather silently and as she gave him her hand at the garden-door, the young girl said suddenly, "Thanks for not bothering me about that. It would have been no use, for only one thing would ever make me give her up."

"And that one thing?"

"That—she should give me up, and she won't give up, for she is fond of me; I amuse her."

"All right, I'll not say any more about it. I suppose you have a right to do as you like," he returned.

An hour or two later, Burke met his guests in the terrace of the Casino, and they walked together towards the table he had engaged. The restaurant was very full, for Ravaglia was playing "Pia," and the season was at its height.

Pam, looking very well in a pink frock, darted away just as she was on the point of sitting down and went into the corridor, where she stood talking to a tall woman wrapped in a long fur-trimmed mantle.

"Ravaglia!" observed Sacheverel, rising and bowing to a passer-by, who had been born in Ratcliff Highway, but was now dressed by Worth. "The child is mad about her."

"She is a dear, really," Pauline added, "and nearly wild with nerves to-night. Think of being so cold that you have to wear sables in August!"

Pam came slowly back as she spoke. "Mother, what's the matter with Carissima? She has been crying, and looks like death."

Pauline shrugged her shoulders. "She is nervous, dear, that's all."

But the young girl frowned thoughfully. "No, it isn't that. She is unhappy again, my poor dearest."

"Geniuses are always moody," laughed Burke. "*Ooo!* look at those emeralds! That's Fanchon—what's her name—the little woman in white, over there by the pillar. And there by the door, to the left, are San Gesualdo and his wife." They all turned and looked at the two women and the man to whom their juxtaposition was so well known.

"His wife does look cheery," remarked Pam. "Poor thing, how she must loathe having him with her when she knows he's dying to go off and see Fanchon!"

Burke frowned, and then laughed. "How do you know he has the honour of Mademoiselle Chose's acquaintance, Miss Pamela?" he asked teasingly.

"He couldn't very well have given her those emeralds without knowing her, could he?"

A travelling clock on the table struck eight, [illegible] woman glanced at it impatiently.

"To one other person? To whom?"

"To the man you are going to love," returned Ravaglia, with a solemnity in her beautiful deep voice such as Pam had never heard.

"To the man I am going to love."

"Yes. When he comes, he will have a right not only to your future, but to every moment of your past life. That is the difference." She broke off, her hollow eyes burning with bitter earnestness. "I must send you away now. Some day, some one will tell you my story—my real one, not the one fools babble about. Then you will understand. Good-bye, Pam."

Bending over the girl's slight figure in its simple gown, the woman, who has been to this century the incarnation of tragedy, strangely unreal looking in her mediæval gown of green and gold, did a strange thing. She outlined a little cross on the smooth young brow before she kissed it.

"Now go home, my child, and to bed. This play is not for you. And—I have moved into the hotel, I do not return to the villa. Promise me not to try to see me again."

"I promise. But oh——"

"Hush, I must go. Good-bye, Pam. *Addio.*"

Pam rushed from the room and out into the garden by a side door. She had forgotten her dinner, the sound of that one word "Addio" rang in her ears.

Under the stars she stood still, in a lonely alley of the garden. "'The man I am going to love,'" she said slowly, aloud.

CHAPTER V

"My dear Pam,—I am having a vile bout of gout; your aunt and cousin, my natural solaces, are away; your friend and uncle, Dick Maxse, is shooting in Scotland. I am a lonely aged man. Will you come? We parted somewhat unceremoniously, and some time has elapsed since that but my anger never had any staying power, and I want you. So come and amuse me. Bring all your belongings, for if you find, as the housemaids, I believe, put it, that the place suits you, I'd like you to stay a few years with me.

Your affectionate grandfather."

"A very good letter, isn't it?" asked Sacheverel, as Burke handed it back to him.

"Very. Rather ungrandfatherly, eh?"

"Can you imagine any one being the conventional grandfather to Pam? I am hard put to it, very often, to be simply paternal." The two men, who were sitting in the garden of the villa, laughed over their cigars.

"Pam certainly is utterly unlike other young girls, Sacheverel."

"Very. The Yeolands have always been queer, and then of course her environments have helped to make her what she is."

Burke leaned back in the wicker chair that looked too fragile for his great frame, and stared up into the fresh green of the lime-tree. "I say, Sacheverel, what do you mean to do with her?"

"Do with her? My dear fellow, I'm sure I haven't the slightest idea! What would you advise?"

"I mean she is grown up now, and men will soon begin to take their place—and a big place, too, unless I am very much mistaken—in her life. Do you want her to marry?"

Sacheverel smiled, his white teeth flashing behind his dark lips.

"Now, Burke, really! The thermometer must be twenty in the shade, and I had a late luncheon, and you ask me questions like that. Let's discuss some simpler question—French politics, for instance!"

Burke, watching him, suddenly felt what the man's charm must be to Pauline Yeoland. It lay, not in what he said, but in the way he said it. Innate gaiety of heart is such a rare thing, and here it was combined with a buoyant irresponsibility, strong passions, and a sort of careless truthfulness that bubbled up of itself in the waters of his nature.

Pauline, in her unmorality, her graceful frivolity, would have been bored by a man whose qualities were built on principles; hurt and wounded by one who was false or harsh, antagonised by one who strived for the virtues she did not possess.

Sacheverel, as absolutely natural in his good as in his bad qualities, was probably the one man in the world into whose nature her own could have fitted as does a key in a well-oiled lock; and Burke, who was himself a much stronger man, for either good or evil, than his host, and who had sometimes wondered what lay in Sacheverel which so held the beautiful, rather silly woman, suddenly knew by a shock of intuition, as Sacheverel gaily expressed his unconcern respecting the future of his daughter, what it was.

"You are a careless beggar," the Australian growled, lighting a fresh cigar at the stump of his old one. "She's your child, after all."

"Of course she is, bless her, and an enchanting young person too. But what's the use, my dear fellow, of laying a lot of plans for her which she'd be sure to demolish if only out of devilment, the minute she ran up against 'em?"

"I'm not asking you to make plans actively, I merely wondered whether you and Pauline wish her to marry or to go into a convent."

"Pam in a convent! *Wouldn't* she set them all by the ears?" returned Sacheverel with a chuckle. "And—marry? Oh yes, I daresay she'll marry some day. I wish you were ten years younger, Burke."

Burke started. "I! She wouldn't look at me."

"Probably not. I wish she would, though. She is going to need a master, for she is very headstrong. Good Lord! how she went on about Gemma Ravaglia! I swear I thought she'd be ill, poor little monkey."

"It was decent of Ravaglia, though. I wonder why she did it?"

Sacheverel hesitated. "I don't know, mind you, but I have an idea Lord Yeoland put her up to it."

"Lord Yeoland! Does she know him?"

"Does she? My respected papa-in-law *à la main gauche* knows, or has known, every one worth his notice for the last half century. She told me years ago that she used to see a good deal of him at one time. Poor soul, she was very much cut up about giving up Pam. Adoration is very pleasant, and my young lady gives it with both hands."

The two men smoked in silence for a few minutes, each of them occupied with his own thoughts.

It was a very warm day in early September, but the little garden was pleasant, and a bird sang in a tree.

After a while Burke said slowly, "You think she'll go to England?"

"Oh, yes, of course she will. The old man is very fond of her; this is the second letter he has sent since she took French leave. The other one was to Pauline, and we didn't mention it to Pam, as we wanted her to go on with her studies; it was that winter in Rome. I know you think me a heathen Chinee for refusing to map out her future life, but you see for the present she will be at Yeoland and then, well, she quite intends doing that mapping herself. She's hard-headed."

"She's also hot-blooded."

Sacheverel stared. "You think so? Well, no doubt she is. I hope so, I'm sure. Most people have Mellin's Food in their veins nowadays."

Burke laughed. "Well, *she* hasn't. And I hope to God 'she will fall in love, when the time comes, with some decen *fellow, for if she doesn't—. Here she is," he added hastily.*

Pam, coming out of the dining-room window in a scant white frock, a sun-bonnet on, and Caliban tucked under her arm, looked childish enough to make Burke feel rather sacriligious.

"Bon soir, la compagnie!" she cried, as she joined them. "I can't shake hands with you until I've put down the box and Cal. How are you? These chocolates are a good-bye offering from the unfortunate Fat Boy. His mamma allowed him to send them on condition of not coming to say good-bye, I suppose. Won't she shriek with joy when she arrives at Monk's Yeoland, and finds me and Pilly nicely installed there?"

Opening the box she offered of its contents to the two men, and then poked about in it with a pointed fore-finger until she had found exactly what she herself wanted.

"If I have a weakness, which I trust you are both too polite to admit, it is for *pistachio* and chocolate. Cal prefers *noisette*, don't you, you beauty?"

Since Burke's telling her that Caliban looked like her, she had taken great pleasure in pointing out that small beast's good looks on every occasion.

"Well," she went on briskly, as the two men did not speak, but watched her with lazy enjoyment, "what do you think of my sun-bonnet? I made it myself. If you look closely you will see that it is adorned with much gore—my poor finger is lacerated—but I think the bonnet rather charming."

Taking off the quaint little head-dress she put it on the monkey, and tied the strings in a neat bow under his chin.

"Observe the sweetness of *that!*" she exclaimed, turning the little creature around. "Isn't he lovely? Just look how it increases his beauty!"

But Caliban, springing from her knees, ran to what he considered a safe distance, and began clawing frantically at the offending article, and using language in his shrillest voice. Pam flew after him, and when he hurried away from her, still chattering profanely, a mad chase began round and round the little enclosure, in which the girl ran with as much excitement as the monkey, and with as little thought of personal dignity. At length she cornered him behind a thicket of rose-trees, and calling Burke to block one exit, crept in over the thick grass, on all fours.

After a violent scuffle and burst of breathless laughter she emerged, a long scratch on her cheek, one of her plaits hanging loose, and a green stain on her frock.

“He's bitten a great hole in it,” she said to Burke, as he took the quivering Caliban, and she gathered up her hair, “and he tried to bite me, the little demon. There's gratitude for you!”

“He has palpitation of the heart, though, poor little beggar!”

“*Oh!*”

Dropping her hair and the *corpus delicti*, she ran to him and laid an anxious hand on the monkey's small breast.

“He has. How it beats! Oh, Mr. Burke, do you think he'll die?” Her big eyes, positively tragic, were raised to his.

“No,” he returned a little unsteadily, “people—that is, monkeys—don't die from a palpitation of the heart. Mine, for instance, is pumping like the devil, this very moment.”

“Yours? But you didn't run. Oh I wish I could see whether he is pale or not,” she added, turning to the monkey again.

“Damn the brute!” ejaculated Burke roughly, “you care more for him than you do for me.”

Her hand, still on the monkey's heaving little chest, she turned again to the man, a slight frown drawing her strongly marked brows together. He was breathing hard, and his red-brown eyes looked steadily into hers.

“You know what I mean?” he said at length abruptly.

A little smile stirred her lips and the frown disappeared. “Yes, I know,” she returned, as frank as he.

“And it amuses you!”

“No. I don't want to give you palpitations of the heart, but do you really mean it? Because if you do, I must be grown-up!”

He burst out laughing, as he had laughed long ago in the Casino garden.

"Well, am I not?" she persisted. "If I weren't, you wouldn't look at me like that."

"Got that brute, have you?" Sacheverel came sauntering towards them as he spoke, his hands in his pockets.

"Yes," called Burke, adding under his breath to Pam, "Of course you are, and you know it."

PART III

CHAPTER

TEN days later Pam and Pilgrim were once more driven up the avenue at Monks' Yeoland. The young girl sat very erect, her hands folded in her lap, her quick eyes darting glances on all sides through the trees of the park.

"Glad to come back, Pilly?"

Pilgrim sighed. "I'm glad, and yet at the same time I'm sorry, Miss Pam, which takes the satisfaction out of things, somehow. I'd much rather be all glad or all sorry."

"Life isn't so simple as that," returned Pam sagely, "and for my part, I am glad it isn't. I rather enjoy small puzzlements, you know."

"Them as 'as small puzzlements doesn't always escape big ones, Miss Pam."

"Some do. I, for instance. It all depends on whether one really knows what one wants, Pilly, and then forging straight ahead toward that one thing."

The girl frowned as she spoke, the frown of mental intentness. It seemed more a withdrawing of her eyes under her brows than a movement of the brows themselves.

Pilgrim shook her head. Life was all complications and inner conflict to her, and she had grown much older in the last few years.

"There is always h'obstacles, Miss Pam."

Pam gave a sudden short laugh of anticipatory triumph.

"And obstacles are made to be jumped over, or at least climbed over, you dear old croker! Sometimes I long for great obstacles just for the joy of surmounting them! Oh, here we are! Dear old house. And there is good old Judson at the door. 'I *am* glad, Pillikins, aren't you?'"

Pilgrim straightened her grim bonnet and sighed. As she had suffered under the troubles Pauline had never even observed, so the poor soul grieved in anticipation of Pam's future ones.

Lord Yeoland was in his room, the butler told her, so leaving Pilly in the hall, Pam run upstairs.

"Grandfather, may I come in?"

The old man, who was sitting in his roll-chair close to a bright fire, turned delightedly at the sound of her vibrant young voice, and as she kissed him and chattered on, he realised how desperately bored he had been during the six years since she had gone.

"How's your mother?"

"Very well, thank you; she sent you her love."

"*H'm!* And—your father?"

"Father is well, too. They always are, you know. He's growing a little bald, it is such a joke!"

The old man, who looked fresh and rosy in spite of his gout, looked at her slily.

"And we have grown up! Our hair is braided around our head, our skirts are long, and we have a figure! To say nothing of a lover."

Pam started, a quick blush dying her face. "Oh—you mean Ratty! Can you imagine any one being so idiotic?"

"Also, we laugh at the unfortunate who ventures to love, and not to please us. My dear, you are definitely and irrevocably a woman."

She laughed. "Yes, I am nearly seventeen, an aged female. Do you think me improved? I mean, in looks."

Lord Yeoland studied her face for a moment with much solemnity. "You are still plain," he said at last, "but not quite so plain as formerly. And—I am very glad to have you back, my dear."

"I am glad, too, G. F."

And indeed the young girl was gladder than she could quite explain, even to herself, to be again with the old man, with whom she felt a strong sense of camaraderie. He, for his part, looked back, as the days flew past, at the last few years, with a sort of amused admiration for his own impatience in enduring their dulness. Rosamund and her children as *mets du jour*, with Dick Maxse and an occasional visit as an *entrée*—it was as inexhilarating to look back on it as had been to exist through.

And Pam, spicy little *bonne bouche*, he had, curiously enough, asked for but once. Pauline's reasons for preferring not to let the child return to England, on that one occasion, had seemed to him too good to be protested against, and too annoying for him to wish a repetition of their expression!

Dick Maxse had given him a good deal of trouble, by going in for company-promoting, and one or two of his performances in that line had enraged the old man as no one had ever seen him enraged. During a period of eighteen months the culprit had been forbidden to introduce his now reddening nose into the precincts of Monks' Yeoland, and during that time poor Rosamund's aspect of patient woe had nearly driven her father mad.

On the whole, as he now enjoyed Pam's presence, Lord Yeoland wondered how the deuce he had been able to exist so long without it.

"The fun, however," the wicked old man thought with a merry rub of his small dry hands, "the real fun will begin when Ratty comes down; and it will go on increasing, unless I am, which would be very singular, quite out of my reckoning, every day she grows older. She is going to be a woman with whom all sorts of men will fall in love. And I shall marry her to some one of the sighing brigade, by Jove!"

This idea gradually took possession of him, as was perhaps not unnatural.

He was powerful enough socially to be sure that many a man who fell under the charm of Pam's rather unusual personality would not hesitate to marry her, as his granddaughter. It had amused him, in the old days when Pam had been at Monks' Yeoland as a child, to present her as occasion arose, to his various neighbours, as "Pamela Yeoland, my grand-daughter." The reception of this bit of information had varied in detail, as when Lady Oxton-

Smythe had raised her painted eye-brows, or whe malicious dowager who was visiting in the neighbourh murmured something about not having known that L Yeoland had a son. The only person who had refuse acknowledge Pam was the wife of the old man's heir, Mrs. Fred Yeoland was unpopular enough to make act very unfavourably commented on by every one heard of it. So on the whole Pam had been accepted her grandfather was emphatically the greatest man o county, bar the Marquis of Budcombe, a kindly old ge man who collected butterflies and beamed like the on righteous and unrighteous alike, for the excellent re that he was too deaf to be able to hear of either vi or sins.

And now she had returned, and Lord Yeoland am himself with making plans for that future to which felt so strongly her own exclusive right.

One evening in November, Lord Yeoland and Pam in the library listening and waiting for the carriage w had gone to the station to fetch Mrs. Maxse and Ev who had been visiting in London, and whom Pam ha yet seen.

Pam sat on the club fender, in this case a comfor broad and low one covered with red leather, Caliban i lap, while her grandfather, temporarily pretty well, near her, leaning back in his arm-chair.

"This room," the old man began, after a long p during which he had studied her thoughtful face q "is a very good background for you, my dear."

"Is it, grandfather?"

"Yes. The books are rather gorgeous, you see, the crimson of the curtains and the chairs is becomi you. So is the fire too."

"I love a fire. And I verily believe poor old would die without the sight of the flames. He lie thinks how he wishes he could roll in the nice hot c don't you, Cal?"

Caliban turned his weird little face to her and tol

"And what are you thinking about all the time, my dear? You are very thoughtful of late."

The girl looked up at him. "You noticed? Well, grandfather, I suppose I might as well tell you. It's a man."

"A man? *Already?*" Lord Yeoland sat up and looked at her alertly. "Not that pink and yellow curate, I hope?"

"Mr. Morecambe? Oh, no. Some one you never heard of. You see, it's rather queer. He used to be awfully in love with mother."

"With your mother? I didn't know she ever knew a man before Kennedy."

"Lie still, Caliban, and stop snoring! Oh, it wasn't that long ago. It was four years ago at Aix. One night at the opera I saw him staring at mother. Pilly and I were in the stalls, and she and father were in a *loge*, and he saw me watching, and I smiled at him."

"That was kind of you, my dear."

"And then he followed me out into the garden and asked me all about her."

"Good heavens, my dear, did they let you roam about talking to strange men? Pauline ought to know better," commented the old man irascibly.

"Asked all about her," went on the girl, without noticing the interruption. "I told him who she was, and who father was, and then the next day father found that he was an old friend; they used to live in the same house in London, years ago. So, of course, he—the man, I mean, used to come a lot to see us. He was very much in love with mother."

She paused, and sat thoughtfully staring at the carpet until he recalled her with a curt "Go on!"

"Oh, yes. Well, he's always been a great friend of ours, ever since, and I had a letter from him yesterday."

"Still in love with your mother?"

"Oh no. That's just it; the poor thing is in love with *me* now."

"Is he, indeed? Has he told you so?"

mally sensitive, is still, under either category, subject to limitations.

Ratty's limitation was the hint of a hat-pin.

"Very well, Pam," he said, blowing his nose with dignity, "I'll go away. I'm going back to Oxford in a few days, and until I do go, I'll not bother you as you call it, but the time may come, my dear girl, when you will realise that the offer of marriage from a—a man of my position is not to be scorned by a girl—in yours."

Then he went, leaving her to pull out his arrow and look at it.

"Horrid little brute," she exclaimed aloud, as she leaned over the parapet, and watched his retreating figure through the trees. "A man in his position, indeed! Thank goodness he's going away. And what a fuss they all do make about marriage. Even dear old G. F. thinks he's going to cook up a nice little matrimonial scheme for me. If they only knew!"

She leaned against the rough grey stone parapet, over which she could just see a slim little figure in a red jersey and Tam looking thoughtfully down into the wintry leaves of the oak in the Refectory, her head making a pretty enough picture to a man who had just entered the ruin and stood looking up at her.

"Pam!"

"Mr. Burke!"

Burke, looking bigger than ever in his long rough great coat, took off his hat, and stood bareheaded as they talked.

"Why didn't you answer my letter?"

"I had nothing to say to it."

"I told you I was coming."

"And you have come. How do you like Birchmere? I hear the last man left because the chimneys all smoked so."

"Hang the chimneys. Pam, I'm coming up."

"All right, only go slow: the stairs are old, and Ratty has already been up and down them once."

Burke, as he emerged on the platform, answered her observation with a great nervous laugh, adding, "You *are* the rudest little beggar!"

"Yes, am I not? How are you?"

She gave him her hand in its shabby dogskin glove with careless good nature, and then went on conversationally, "Sorry I can't offer you a chair and some tea."

"I don't want tea. But are you going to stay here long?"

"I don't know. Why do you ask?"

"Because if you are, I am going to offer you a seat."

She stared. "What do you mean?"

"I know what I mean," he returned with an air of mystery, and an effort to overcome his visible nervousness.

"Then suppose you tell me, my good man, for I have every intention of staying here for—several hours."

"You have! You don't find it rather chilly?"

"Balmy. I spend all my evenings here for preference." She laughed, enjoying teasing him, as she spoke, but her laughter ceased suddenly as, without a word, he stooped, caught her up, and with great gentleness set her down on the parapet over which she had just been able to see when standing.

"Oh! How strong you are!"

He stood with his arms still around her, his face close to her clasped hands. "Yes, I am strong. How do you like your perch, you little titmouse, you?"

"I'm not a titmouse, you old—mastodon. You needn't hold me, I'll not fall off."

He did not move. "What if I should hold you out there, over the edge, and then drop you?"

"If you did, I should fall. And then how sorry you'd be when you heard me squashing on the stones."

He started back, still holding her, and the colour left his face. "You little ghoul. Don't say such things. Tell me, Pam, are you glad to see me?"

Pam was small, but she had never in her life realised that she was so until this great rough man had swung her up to her perch there on the tower and stood before her. Suddenly she said, "Take me down, please."

He obeyed, holding her for a moment in the air, and then very tenderly, setting her down on the rough stone platform.

"How big you are!" she said slowly, looking up at him, "and how little I am. I am glad I am little."

"Why?" he asked with curiosity.

"Because, some day, when I love some man, I want him to be able to carry me as you did."

Burke drew a deep breath and walked abruptly to the other side of the platform. He knew that she was too young to be made love to, but she was making things hard for him.

And as he went, she remembered what she had herself forgotten for the moment, in the thought that had come to her of the man whose existence Madame Ravaglia's words had made her aware, the man she was some day to love.

She remembered that Burke loved her, and thought that she had hurt him. It was an episode that had no precedent; she enjoyed hurting the obnoxious Ratty, but she liked Burke and as yet no curiosity had come to her about the depth and exact nature of his feelings.

"Shall we go in and get some tea?" she began a little uncertainly; "it must be time."

"A most excellent idea. I was as a matter of fact on my way to call on your grandfather. I have something for him."

"For my grandfather? What, I wonder?"

"A photograph of your mother," he returned as they went down the winding stair. "It was taken just before I left Paris, and she sent a copy to him."

"Oh! What gown did she have on? And who did her hair? I *do* hope not that horrid 'Charles;' he makes all the heads on earth look identically alike!"

"All those things you'll have to decide for yourself, my dear child. It's a low gown, and her hair looks much as usual, that's all I know."

Lord Yeoland, whom they found alone in the library, was very gracious to Burke, and accepted the photograph with great pleasure.

"An excellent picture—remarkably like her. She has changed very little since—since I saw her," he said putting his pince-nez back into its case. "What are you looking for, Pam?"

Pam, who was down on her hands and knees peering under a great arm-chair beyond the radius of the lamplight, turned her face over her shoulder. "I'm looking for poor old Cally, grandfather. You swore you'd look after him —he's so homesick to-day, poor dear. I suppose it's his birthday or some other anniversary."

"Meaning that the little brute is in even a viler temper than usual. Mr. Burke, you probably have the honour of the creature's acquaintance, and will understand when I tell you and his irate mistress that after he had twice tried to bite me I had to send him up to Pilgrim."

Pam, who had risen, went to the door and rang.

"You must have got on his nerves, then," she retorted, rather ungraciously, "for he almost never bites. James, fetch my monkey, will you?"

When tea and the banished Caliban had appeared, and Pam had dispensed the former in her usual somewhat haphazard way, she sat down by the fire and listened gravely while her grandfather and his new neighbour made conversation.

When at last Burke had gone, she did not speak until the old man exclaimed suddenly, "And you think he is in love with you?"

"Yes. Don't you?

"I don't know. I saw nothing particularly decisive I must say."

"Oh, he's not an idiot, you know. But isn't it a pity he should waste his time on me?"

"Why must it necessarily be waste of time? He seems a very good sort of man, my dear."

Pam nodded absently. "Oh yes, only he isn't—I mean, wouldn't it be excellent, grandfather, if he should fall in love with *Evy?*"

"Why in the name of goodness should he do that?"

"I don't say that he should, only that I wish he *would*. She is *really* grown up, you know, nearly nineteen. And he is frightfully rich. I do like him so much."

Lord Yeoland smiled. "Then why don't you consider him yourself?"

"Oh no. I can't exactly explain," she returned, rising and taking up her hat and jacket, "but he isn't the man for me at all."

"I see. It may be a little awkward then, his settling down here."

"No. I was afraid of that too, until I had seen him, but now I know better. He won't bother me yet; he's waiting until I'm older."

"By Jove! Now, how in the world did you get hold of that idea?" said the old man highly amused and delighted.

"I don't know, but I'm sure it's right, G. F., dear."

CHAPTER III

AND she was right, as Lord Yeoland, from his vantage ground of neutral observation, soon admitted to himself.

Burke was not a particularly clever man, but he had a certain strength of his own, and he was, as the old onlooker called it, a stayer. Once over his first nervousness, the big Australian settled down into a calm that would have disarmed any one not so keen-sighted as the two Yeolands. He did not promenade his hopes or his occasional woes for the benefit of his small public, nor did he bore the Monks' Yeoland household by over frequent visits. There was a simple dignity about his whole attitude which pleased Lord Yeoland, as did also the line he took towards the county.

In spite of his great size, Burke rode well, and all that winter he followed the hounds regularly. Then, for he was generous, he subscribed largely to the church building fund, and did, in a frank, though unobtrusive way, a great deal of good to the poor in his neighbourhood.

"A very nice fellow, Cunningham, isn't he?" Lord Yeoland once remarked to the Rector, and that good man was all enthusiasm.

Cazalet, on the other hand, did not take to the new comer, and it gave his employer much mild pleasure to confide in the old steward his hopes that Pam might one day become Mrs. Burke.

"Indeed, my lord. *H'm!*" Cazalet, who had less hair and more wrinkles than of old, but whom Pam had found otherwise delightfully unchanged rubbed his hand across back of his head, a trick he had in moments of slight embarrassment.

"Yes. I am not a matchmaker, as you know, but—

well, Cazalet, you are an old friend, and I am sure your interest in Pamela is almost as great as my own. You discovered her, you know!"

"Yes, my lord. I am—*h'm!*—very fond of Miss Pamela."

"But I understand from your manner that you do not approve of this Mr. Burke as a possible husband for her? Mind you, it is all, of course, merely conjecture on my part."

"It is not for me to approve or to disapprove, your lordship, but—as you ask me, I don't mind saying that I do think your grand-daughter might look higher."

Lord Yeoland nodded, suddenly thoughtful. "No doubt; no doubt. When all is said and done, we of course know nothing of the man, except that he seems a good sort of fellow, and is generous with his money."

"She is so unlike most young ladies," went on the steward hesitatingly; "she seems to me to be so much more original-minded. I don't think money could make her happy."

"Neither do I, Cazalet, neither do I. But—well, I confess it has looked to me a good way out of what after all is bound to be more or less of a difficulty. What if she should fall in love with some one who *couldn't* marry her? I mean, because of his rank?"

"I know. But she certainly doesn't care a pin for this Mr. Burke, your lordship."

"Right again. And she is 'ower young to marry' as yet."

The steward rose. "I have promised to be at Orchard Farm at noon, my lord, *h'm!* I should like to ask, if I may, whether P—, Miss Pamela has ever mentioned to you her views on—on marriage?"

"On marriage? No, not of late. She once told me, years ago, poor little thing—" He broke off and was silent.

"If I might make a suggestion, my lord, it might, I think, be well for you to—*h'm!*—ascertain her present opinion on the subject. I fear, indeed, I am sure that you will find it—unchanged."

Lord Yeoland laughed. He anticipated a merry half-hour with Pam on that great question, and was not in the least disposed to take her views seriously.

"No use in talking about it, grandfather, is there? I am, as you say, too young really to have any views at all on such matters."

"But you happen, at the same time, to have such views, and unless I am very much mistaken, you fundamentally disapprove of marriage as an institution?"

She hesitated, resting both hands lightly on the vase she was filling with flowers, and looking at him with thoughtful brows across the shining oak table.

"As an institution? That sounds rather political, and I shy at politics, G. F., dear. No, I don't mean anything about institutions. My point of view looks towards constitutions; and as you insist on my telling you, I don't mind stating that my own constitution is too delicate to stand such solid diet as matrimony. It is to some people, and I am one of them, as indigestible as cold plum pudding."

Encouraged by his look of polite interest she went on slowly, but with a flash of delight in her eyes, "I may even say, that to my ignorance, that most holy state *seems* like a plum pudding. On the day when it is served up hot, burning merrily and decked with holly, it seems harmless enough, and even to be recommended. But, alas, the next day, you yourself will admit that the flame and the heat are gone, and only the soggy indigestibility remains. That I find rather a knock-down argument," she added with a brilliant smile; "don't you?"

"Excellent. Most florid and effective, my dear, but—however, as we agree, you are rather young yet, so we will wait for a few years before your opinion is considered final. Also," he added slily, "until the right man happens to be waiting for your answer to his—"

"'Will you, won't you, will you, won't you, will you join the dance?'" she quoted. "Very well, let's wait, by all means. Only don't think me such an idiot as not to want Evy, for instance, to enter into those sacred bonds."

"Ah! You think Evy adapted to chains?"

Pam laughed. "Imagine the joy of the chains, on sinking comfortably for life on her nice smooth wrists!"

Lord Yeoland did not pursue the subject any further.

One morning in late February, while the ladies of the household sat grouped about one of those splendid fires which are the Briton's natural defence against the unkindness of his native climate, Lord Yeoland came suddenly into the room, propelling his chair with a grand indifference to furniture that bespoke great excitement. "The Duchess is coming, Pam!" he cried, waving a scrap of orange paper towards her. "Bless her heart, she's actually coming!"

Mrs. Maxse looked up in mild wonder. "Dear me, father! You mean Cousin Eliza Wight? What can be bringing her down here now?"

"The joys of my society, Rosamund; isn't that enough?"

He steered himself skilfully into the nook by the fire made for him by Evelyn, and read the telegram aloud.

"'If convenient—Henrietta I—to-day Monday—Eliza Wight.' Really I am delighted."

"Eliza Wight appears to be of an economical turn of mind," observed Pam, doing something very insinuating to the fire with the poker. "I suppose she means that she will stay until Monday?"

"Yes. She is rather economical—an unfortunate virtue in an otherwise charmingly faulty nature. Evy, my dear, just go and tell Mrs. Bean, will you? The blue room for Eliza, I think, eh, Rosamund?"

Evelyn, who was used to having the errands fall to her share, rose obediently and left the room. She was a tall, rather solidly built girl, just turned eighteen, with a sweet, somewhat stupid, face, and beautiful soft hair the colour of fresh country butter.

"Who is Henrietta, grandfather?" Pam asked, turning her back to the fire and indulgently scratching Caliban's drowsy head.

"The Lady Henrietta Shanklin, my dear; her daughter my god-daughter, and one of the handsomest women in England, which is saying a great deal."

"Oh, yes; enough for any one, I should say."

A silence fell on the little group, as each member of it comfortably pursued his or her own thoughts.

Rosamund Maxse, as usual, was thinking of her troublesome husband, of whom she had heard nothing for nearly a month. He was supposed to be on the Riviera getting rid of a cough he had contracted in the autumn, but she was worried about him, and her plain, kindly face looked worn and anxious.

Pam was thinking about Burke, who had been away for a month on the Continent and in London, and wishing that he would come back. He had not said a word to her of his love, but its presence lent an agreeable excitement to the comfortable dulness of her life, and she had begun to experience an uneasy delight in tormenting him. It would, she felt, be very good, that drowsy day, to have some one to torment.

And Lord Yeoland, his smooth-shaven little countenance full of the pleasant light of pleasant thought, was as silent as either of the two women. All sorts of vague possibilities began to form themselves in his mind, in connection with the Duchess's visit. Pam had long since become the very centre of his life; with every hour of the last months the two had grown closer to each other. It was a curious alliance; there were no demonstrations on either side; she had not kissed him since the day of her arrival, she had never once stroked his hair as Evelyn sometimes did; they disagreed, argued, laughed, at each other. But they were friends with a friendship which had nothing to do with relationship or duty; with a friendship which sprang straight from the two souls in some ways so curiously alike though the one was so old and the other so young.

And gradually, in Lord Yeoland's mind the thought of the girl's future grew to be the paramount one. He had long since decided to leave her a comfortable fortune; now he began to chafe at the social limitations that confronted him in his dreams for her. But for that little ceremony which had not taken place between her mother and her father, she would shortly have been a match for the best in the land. Now, even with his great influence to back her, she would have to put up with something less than the best. Unless—and his old head reared itself at the thought—one of the best should so love her that he should not care about that neglected ceremony. He himself, surely of the best, would not have hesitated one second, and surely there must still be men of the same metal? He had thought so long on the subject that he had become confused and involved, and the knowledge that the Duchess of Wight was coming was like a ray of light in a black night.

Eliza, if she could be induced to take an interest in Pam, would be the most convincing sponsor in the world for the girl. Her Grace, who in spite of several ancient peccadilloes, had somehow managed to keep well on the sunny side of Royal favour, had indeed, been one of the very hardest on Pauline, and once he knew, had, on meeting the blissful sinner in the Vatican Gallery, given her the most pronounced snub possible.

"And she had the face to pretend," her Grace had told Lord Yeoland, "not to see me!"

"Nonsense. You know as well as I that none of us ever pretend."

"The rest of you, I admit; it is the one good quality of your race."

"It isn't a virtue, Eliza; it's indolence, or indifference. Few things seem to us worth while doing at all, and none worth pretending!"

"But if something does present itself to you in the light of worth-whileness," retorted the old woman, grimly humorous, "nothing on this side the grave can stop you."

She herself not being famed for possessing the most tractable of dispositions, Lord Yeoland, sitting now by the fire, against which Pam's regular young profile stood out in strong relief, pondered all these things. The great lady who might, if she chose, smooth his darling's path to greatness, might, provided the two strong natures clashed, block that same way with the greatest ease. The essential thing, therefore, was to avoid a clash, and then to coax into existence a mutual liking that had no particular reason for being, and against which so much militated.

As he was in his way a wise old man, he decided to let matters take their course.

CHAPTER IV

THE Duchess of Wight and the Lady Henrietta Shanklin arrived at six that afternoon, and when they came downstairs found their host, his daughter and Evelyn sitting together around the freshly supplied tea-table.

Lord Yeoland had often chafed under the conviction that he did not bore his daughter and his elder granddaughter. They bored him so inexpressibly that he would have taken a wicked satisfaction in the knowledge that they found him as irksome as he found them; but, as a matter of fact, they both enjoyed his society, and it being their well-meant habit to tell him so, he chafed helplessly. So, as he waited for his guests to repair the damages of their journey, time had dragged, and when the Duchess came down, his joy had an extra keenness.

"Well, Oswald, how are you? It's very good of you to let us blow in in this casual way! How do you do, Rosamund; ah, Evelyn, how pretty you have grown, my dear."

Her Grace, a tall old woman with palpably dyed red hair and a made-up complexion, sat down by the fire and held up to it a remarkably small foot in a red slipper.

"Warmer here than in Derbyshire; we've been freezing at the Danchester's this past week. Cora Danchester pretends to think a decently warm house unhealthful, so we wore fur capes to dinner. How's your gout?"

"Infernal. I'm getting an old man now," returned Lord Yeoland, handing her the muffins.

"You are seventy; I am sixty-four. How do you like my hair?"

"Pretty red, isn't it? However I like it better than the canary-colour it was the last time I saw you."

"Oh, yes, that was rather bad. Funny of us all to dye our hair, isn't it? We all do, however!"

Evelyn listened with wonder written all over her face, a fact which neither escaped nor restrained the Duchess, who was going on to describe the wonders worked by a new American dentist in Bryanston Square, in the artificial teeth line, when the door opened again and her daughter came in.

Lady Henrietta was one of those few dazzling blonde English beauties who take the colour out of all other women, and reduce most people, on first sight, to rapturous silence.

"My dear," her host exclaimed with the enthusiasm so charming in a man of his age, "You are lovelier than ever!"

"I am very glad you think so, Cousin Oswald," she returned, greeting Mrs. Maxse and Evelyn; "you are certainly a good judge."

She sat down and drank her tea with slightly bored composure while her mother gave vent to a little burst of woe on the trials of being the parent hen of such a brilliant duckling.

"Heaven knows I never was vain, was I, Oswald?" her Grace said plaintively, "and I would never have dreamed of dyeing my hair or doing messy things to my plain old face. Only one can't go about looking an absolute fright, can one? And I, in my natural mouse and yellow tints, am, beside that wretch, ugly enough to stop a motor-car. My only consolation is that, when she does fade, it'll all go quickly, for her features are not much, as you see for yourself!"

Evelyn's horror at this unmotherly speech was almost too much for her grandfather, who, after a few words of sympathy, changed the subject. "Who else was at Danchester?" he asked.

"Oh, a lot of bores and some political men. Cora is growing very keen on politics as her precious Billy grows up! Sir John Barry was there, and Lewisham."

"Nasty little Jew, Lewisham—Levisohn."

"He will get this Bill through, just the same; and then there was the new man, the Member for Radbroke—Peele."

Lord Yeoland straightened up suddenly. "The fellow who was fined after that speech in the House? Was he indeed?"

"He was. Wasn't he, Henny?"

"Yes, mamma." Lady Henrietta set down her cup as she answered. "He is coming down here," her Grace went on, a note of malicious amusement in her voice. "He is here this minute, as far as that is concerned—at the Pockington's. Came down in the train with us. It may interest you to know," she added, with something nearly approaching a wink, "that he is very much attracted by *me*."

Lady Henrietta rose and going closer to the fire stood with her back to it, fingering a fine jewelled chain she wore and smiling tranquilly. "Which means, Cousin Oswald, that Mr. Peele is a friend of *mine*."

"You may be congratulated then, my dear, for I gather that he is a very clever young man. I always read his speeches."

"Yes, he is clever. But he is not so very young; he is thirty-five."

"When is his birthday, dear?" asked her mother sweetly.

"December 21, mamma darling," was the tranquil reply, and then, quite naturally, the beauty begged Evelyn to go and have a game of billiards with her. A few moments later Rosamund, too, left the room, and the old friends were alone.

"Quaint, isn't it?" the Duchess began, promptly, with a sigh of relief.

"What is quaint?"

"You know. I wasn't baiting her for nothing, was I?"

"You mean that Peele and she——?"

"I mean nothing whatever about Peele. I don't pretend to understand the workings of his mind, but I know my Henny! She is in love with the man, Oswald."

Lord Yeoland rubbed his chin. "Dear me, is she indeed? He's not a person she could possibly marry, is he?"

"There's only one obstacle so far as I can see—he may not ask her."

"Good heavens! Eliza!"

"Exactly. He's no more in love with her than he is with me. On the other hand, she would be very useful to him."

"But who is he? I know, of course, that he is a brilliant speaker, and that they say he's to have an Under-Secretaryship, but——"

"Oh, he's not such a worm socially, as you imagine, my dear friend! As to that, he goes everywhere. Cora Danchester was as pleased as punch to have him, and he is going on to Levallion!"

"I see." The old man gazed reflectively into the fire. "And she likes him."

"Madly in love with him, Oswald! Between you and me, she has been for over a year. She met him on the Umfreville's yacht. He, however, appears to have seized the idea of the possibility of marrying her only quite lately. Queer, isn't it, the whole thing?"

"I shall be interested in seeing the man. Where is he stopping, did you say?"

As he spoke a servant brought in a note. "For Mrs. Maxse, my lord, from Wanby Hall."

"Oh, Oswald, read it! It's to ask leave to bring him to-night," cried the Duchess. "I saw Sir Henry at the station, and he said he was dining here."

"Take it to Mrs. Maxse, James. She is in the drawing-room, I believe. Poor Rosamund will be in despair," he added, as the footman left the room; "she bustled about this morning to get a couple of men for you and Henrietta, and this chap upsets the table again! However, one of the girls can come down."

"One of the girls?"

"Yes. Pauline's daughter is living with me now."

The duchess's face hardened. "I didn't know she had a daughter."

"Yes, you did; I wrote you all about it years ago."

"Oh, did you? Well, I had forgotten."

"Don't be nasty to her, Eliza."

"Of course I shan't be nasty to her, but I greatly doubt the wisdom of having her here."

Lord Yeoland sighed. "My dear girl, is wisdom to be expected from me? And when I tell you that I love her? That she is the one thing on earth that amuses me?"

"I am glad of that, Oswald," returned the old woman obstinately, "but I cannot forgive Pauline."

"No one expects that, but Pam needs no forgiveness, does she? Mind you," he added, "I'm not asking you to like her; I may be an old fool, but I know that that would be demanding too much of any woman in your position. You two will be antagonistic in the very nature of things; I only want you not to be snifty with her."

"Snifty! A charming word!"

"Well, high-nosed, if you prefer it."

Her Grace burst out laughing. "Very well, I'll promise to do my best which is as much as any woman can answer for!"

When he was alone, Lord Yeoland grinned to himself.

"Rather cunningly managed," he said aloud.

If the Duchess should take a liking to Pam it would not only be the child's social salvation, but a particularly bitter pill to Fred Yeoland's horrid little wife. "Good old Eliza," the old man added with another grin.

CHAPTER V

A FEW minutes later, Pam came bursting into her grandfather's room wet and muddy, but glowing with excitement.

"Grandfather, is it true? Is Peele really dining here?"

"Yes, my dear. Is the news too much for you?"

"James Peele! Oh, G. F., if I can't see him I shall simply die!"

The old man laughed. "Allow me then to save your life by suggesting that you come down after dinner!"

"After dinner! I want——"

Lord Yeoland looked up sharply towards the door. "Who is it? Who is there?" he called; "do come in and stop fiddling with the knob!"

It was Mrs. Maxse, her face wearing the look of one in great affliction. "Oh, father," she began at once, twisting her hands together nervously, "where am I to get another woman? Sir Henry might have known his extra man would upset us!"

The old man rubbed his ear thoughtfully. "I don't much mind having a man on the other side of me," he answered; "it's a small dinner—only I won't have any one who is deaf, and I won't have Cunningham."

"Dear papa, you know we can't do that! Oh, it is so awkward!"

"Well—oh yes, of course, as I told Eliza, one of the girls can come down!"

"I'll come, grandfather!" Pam had risen and stood looking up with gleaming eyes. "I'm seventeen—plenty old enough, and you know how I want to see him."

"Good! Then, Rosamund, that's settled!"

Mrs. Maxse flushed. "You know you said that other ne when Evelyn came down that you wouldn't have her of the girls until they were older."

"That was because Evy sat like an image and bored or Garstang to death. And then Mrs. Bentley-Cooke as there," he added, with the tribute of a chuckle to the emory of one of that lively lady's little stories. "Pam ill talk, won't you, Pam?"

"I do think it ought to be Evy," persisted his daughter ith gentle obstinacy.

Pam turned, her eyes very monkey-like and full of the isdom of the ages, to her aunt. "Grandfather wants me, unt Rosamund!"

"Very well, papa, as long as you really do want her."

The old man nodded.

"Cut along, my dear, and make yourself lovely. Yes, Rosamund, I do in this particular instance prefer to have Pam. Thanks; now I must go and dress. Jenkins is waiting for me."

Pam flew to her room and was soon deep in the mysteries of choice between a pale blue *crêpe* frock that had lost a little of its freshness but was of Parisian make, and a white silk, new, but obviously made in the country.

No one was ever more surprised than she when, just as she had wisely decided in favour of the blue *crêpe*, Evelyn came in and declared that she wished to go to the dinner instead of her cousin.

If the proverbial worm had not only turned, but risen on its tail-tip and proceeded to strike at her with venomous fury, Pam could not have been more taken aback.

"But you know you hated that one dinner when Aunt Rosamund was ill," she returned, dropping the scissors with which she was at work on her blue corsage.

"I know I did. But I like this one, and I'm going down."

"What will grandfather say?"

This was a subterfuge, for Pam had not the slightest intention of giving way.

But Evelyn stood her ground stolidly. "Grandfather won't care; he only wanted you rather than me because you wanted to come."

"Well? I *still* want to!"

"But if you let me come instead, he won't care. Pam, you don't mind?"

Pam clashed the scissors mockingly. "But I *do*. Now don't bother me my child; my great mind is sternly bent on how to make a high-necked frock into a low one, in half an hour's time."

"But—oh, Pam, please let me. You don't know how I want to come. I'll do anything on earth for you, if you will. It is a very serious matter with me, and it is only curiosity on your part."

Pam rose suddenly and came close to her, looking in her white underwaist and short red silk petticoat, very childish, but at the same time strangely distinct as an individuality.

"Evelyn Maxse," she said sternly, "it's a man."

Evelyn blushed with helpless embarrassment.

"Who is he?"

"Oh, Pam, how can you think such things?"

"How can you *do* such things?"

"But I haven't done one thing, Pam. Really and truly I haven't."

"Then what has he done?"

Evelyn broke down and wept on her judge's still thin young shoulder. "He has done nothing; he doesn't even know. And I do so want to see him!" she sobbed.

"Well, tell me who it is and I'll see what I can do," urged Pam with calm confidence.

"It's Mr. Morecambe."

At first Pam could not believe her ears, and then, with a sudden laugh that affection for her cousin rendered ilent, she patted that weeping maiden gently on her back nd bade her wipe her eyes.

"'Dearly Beloved!' So it's him—he, I mean. And o you adore him?"

"I don't adore him, but—I wish you wouldn't call him Dearly Beloved, Pam."

"Don't be crusty; you named him yourself, and you now he *does* say it a hundred times in every sermon. Well, you may go to dinner, so stop howling; let me look t your nose."

"Oh, Pam, I may go? And you don't mind?

Pam gave a grim smile. "Not a bit; far be it from me to interfere with Love's young dream. What are you going to wear?"

The grateful Evelyn departed to make herself beautiful for the delectation of her soul's Lord, and Pam sat down and reviewed the situation. Of course she had had no possible alternative. Evelyn's claim obliterated her own, but at the same time she did not mean to miss all the fun.

A few minutes later, after a talk with Pilgrim, she left her room with a smile of triumph, and went to see that Evelyn was not ruining herself by an ill-judged necklace or the wrong kind of flowers.

The only thing for which she had particularly cared, in connection with the dinner, was the opportunity of seeing James Peele. All the autumn and winter she had read of the man and his doings, and there was something in his speeches even on dry political subjects, picturesque enough to touch her imagination.

A picture of him, cut from some paper, and showing him in the act of speaking in public, the forefinger of his right hand lightly laid on the palm of his left in a way evidently characteristic, was pinned over her dressing-table, and as she sat pondering, she raised her eyes to it.

"To think that you should be dining here," she exclaimed aloud, "and I not see you!"

The story of his outburst of speech in the House, in which, in a towering indignation, he had so bluntly arraigned a certain great political light that the papers had been ful of the scene and his purse shortly the lighter by severa thousand pounds—the fine he declared himself glad to pay for the pleasure of having spoken his mind—this and other things about the man came back into the young worshipper's mind.

Suddenly she sprang up and rang for Pilgrim.

"Pilly, take this and cut a big square out of the top, will you?" she cried, as the faithful martyr entered, and throwing the blue corsage at her. "I've got to go down after dinner, or I'll burst, and I wish a low gown."

"But, Miss Pam, what will 'is lordship say?"

"Oh, bother—I mean, never mind that. Get to work, there's a dear, and I'll go and borrow a pair of long gloves from Evelyn."

The dinner went off rather better than most small dinners in the country, for most of these necessary evils are not leavened by the presence of a duchess, a beauty, and a much talked of young politician, and its end was not so rapturously welcomed as usual.

The men had no sooner rejoined the longing women (and the women do long for the men, even if the men be an unserried rank of hopeless bores, after dinner!) than Lord Yeoland asked Lady Henrietta to play, and she took her place at the piano. She was splendid that night in a close-fitting, glittering black gown, her only jewel a big diamond on her right hand. And she played wonderfully well for a woman who was not a musician.

Pam, coming through the outer room, paused and swept a comprehensive glance across the group of presumably listening men and women.

Her grandfather stood by the fire near the Duchess, whose rather shabby velvet gown was ablaze with jewels; opposite them the Rector smiled amiably into space, while the waves of sound passed over his head without touching him. Miss Veronica Marsh, who really loved music and could not play a note, listened with grieved surprise to the meaningless gush of uninterrupted melody.

Pam saw them all. She also could see the back of Sir Henry's head. Coming a step further she stopped suddenly. The man in the corner, standing with folded arms, his head sunk on his chest, was James Peele; she knew him at once. And for several minutes she studied him, the lithe lines of his long figure, the breadth of shoulder, the slimness of his well-shod feet, the close cropped dark head. It was as if he had put himself just there, with nothing between him and her, that she might inspect him.

And then, as the music ceased, he looked up and she saw his face; the thin, keen face with the deep-set grey eyes, the big bony nose and the close-lipped rather large mouth. Not a brilliant face; rather a thoughtful one, above all a hard one, in the sense of determination.

Pam did not know why her breath caught in her throat as she started forward, but it was that unconsciously she recognised, in its perfected prime, the first will she had ever met that was stronger than her own childish one could ever become.

Her welcome by her amused grandfather was warm, and when he introduced her to the Duchess, that great lady, who was growing sleepy, was glad of something to study.

"So you are Lord Yeoland's famous Pam?" she asked.

"Yes, I am Pam. Am I famous?"

"Very. Why were you not at dinner?"

"There was no room. Oh, I wonder where Evelyn is?"

The Duchess laughed. "She went to look at the orchids—or the moon, with the blonde curate."

Pam's eyes danced, but she answered gravely, "There is no moon."

Somehow the Duchess felt herself full of the milk of human kindness, and she saw the injustice of blaming Pam for that without which she could not have been there, with her charming dark eyes full of mischief, to amuse a sleepy old woman.

"My dear, when you are older," her Grace answered, touching the child's hand lightly, "you will know that there are circumstances on which a full moon always shines."

And Pam nodded, quivering with sympathetic understanding.

"They will be, I think, engaged within a week," continued the Duchess. "How old is she?"

"Eighteen. Fearfully young, don't you think?"

Her Grace laughed. "*Young!* How old are you, may I ask?"

"I meant young to be engaged. I am only seventeen."

She had said nothing worth saying, but somehow she had won the old woman's liking, as Lord Yeoland saw with much satisfaction.

A few minutes later Sir Henry Pockington asked her to show him the orchids and they went into the sweet warmth of the great conservatory. On the way they passed close to Pede, who was now talking to Lady Henrietta, and at their approach looked up without ceasing to speak. It thus happened that Pam, whose ears were almost uncannily sharp where she was interested, first met Peele's eyes to the sound of his quiet voice saying deliberately, "Love to me can never be more than that."

Without the slightest change of expression he watched the girl's face until she had passed, and her eyes were as dogged as his.

"Did you hear him?" she asked Sir Henry.

"No. Who? Peele?"

"Yes."

"What did he say?"

"He was making love rather loud, that's all," returned the girl drily.

CHAPTER VI

It was curious that the next time Pam saw Peele it was in a position in which not one woman in a million ever sees a man—that of asking another woman to marry him.

Two or three days after the dinner the young girl came home through the dusk, watching the glories of a really beautiful late winter sunset. The sky, as she cast a last glance at it on the outskirts of the park before plunging into the obscurity of an evergreen plantation, on her way to the house, was a blaze of gold and purple clouds, and on coming again into the open as she approached the monastery ruins it occurred to her that from the top of the tower she would have avery good view of the western sky before going into the house.

Turning to the right she entered the Refectory and ran quickly up the old stairs, whose inequalities she knew now by heart, the place being a great favourite of hers, and came out on to the platform. A cutting had been made through the trees to the west of the house, for the sake of a wild bit of upland view, and the opening, framed in by bare beeches and scant-leaved oaks, was a splendour of light streaked with bright colour.

"Like those little Turners to the left of the door in the National Gallery," the girl murmured to herself, climbing to the parapet by the help of a block of wood she had once brought up for the purpose, and sitting down.

She had been there only a few minutes when she heard voices to her left, down below, and, turning, saw Lady Henrietta wrapped in glossy dark furs, entering the Refectory with a man whom she at once knew, in spite of the disguising properties of a rough greatcoat and a bowler, to be Peele.

The beautiful woman carried her muff to her cheek as in some confusion, and for a moment they were sile Then the man went on in a curiously low, measured voice.

"So you see, Lady Henrietta, my ambition is practical boundless."

"I see. And—I believe in you, Mr. Peele."

Pam, whose early indifference to the heinousness listening to conversations not intended for her ears ha given way under instruction to the usual convention dislike of so doing, drew back cautiously with the inte tion of descending from her precarious perch, but the ligh block of wood, wet with recent rain, slipped from under he searching foot, and bounced out of reach. So, as she coul not get down without a considerable jump, and bein afraid of risking it with damp boots on the wet stones, sh sat still.

The two people below had strolled across the great hal and stood under the big oak. Peele, who was facing th unseen spectator, took off his hat and looked round with a slight frown on his white brow.

"I am glad that you do believe in me; I wonder how far that belief would go."

His delicate face, with the great strength that was so unlike the animal and vital strength of Burke's, interested Pam keenly. The power of restraint that was in it she saw and appreciated, and as she watched, suddenly the idea came to her that that famous burst of anger in the House had not taken him, as every one had supposed, by storm. "He let himself go," she said to herself, with a thrill at feeling herself clever enough to guess such a secret. "He did it on purpose."

Lady Henrietta was looking away, and Pam had not heard her reply to his question, but he was speaking again.

"May I put it to a test?" he asked quietly, his deep-set eyes fixed on his companion's face.

"Yes."

Something in the breathlessness of her answer made the listener's heart give a great throb, as it had long ago in the presence of Charnley Burke's passion for her mother.

Quite forgetful of the exposure of her position and that she had no right to hear, Pam leaned over listening with all her ears.

"Henrietta, will you marry me?"

She did not answer at once, and he went on rapidly but not hurriedly. "Of course, many people would think me very audacious to ask you, but I am an audacious man, and I want you. You know everything there is to know about me—that my father was merely a poor country gentleman, whereas yours was the Duke of Wight; that I am poor myself, whereas you are rich. Will you marry me?"

Pam had listened to all this with no conscious qualms at all, but when Lady Henrietta raised her proud head from her muff and looked up at him without a word, the young girl suddenly shut her eyes so tight that they hurt, and stuffed the tips of her dogskin fingers into her ears.

She had no right to see and hear that.

"That's like mother and father," she thought, in an agony of sympathy. "She really *does!*"

After a moment that seemed an eternity, she opened her eyes, and when she could see, beheld Peele raising his head from his *fiancée's*. He had kissed her, but she looked, Pam thought, as though she had been in heaven.

Peel's subsequent remarks were uninteresting, and Pam began to cast about in her mind as to how she should manage to get away, provided Lady Henrietta continued to stand there with her hand on his arm indefinitely.

It was, however, the *fiancée* herself who solved the question.

"Let me go on ahead, please," she said rather tremulously. "Mamma will tease me—come in about half an hour."

"Very well. Good-bye until then." He kissed her gently, and she went out.

Pam, waiting for him to take himself off likewise forgot that, there now being nothing to keep his eyes busy below, they might turn towards her, but so it happened. After standing perfectly still for a few minutes, a slight frown on his immobile face, he suddenly looked up.

"Hello!"

"Hello!" answered the girl faintly

"What are you doing here?"

"Sitting down. Did you think I was flying?" she laughed as she answered.

"I saw you the other evening at Lord Yeoland's," he went on still frowning.

"You did. I am Pam Yeoland—Pamela."

"And how long, may I ask, have you been perched up there?"

"About half an hour."

His frown deepened, which somehow had the effect of putting her at her ease.

"I can't help it, I can't get down. Perhaps you wouldn't mind helping me?" she went on.

"Not at all, how can I get up?"

"The stairs are there, to your left."

A few seconds later he stood beside her. "How did you get up?"

"By the block over there; when I tried to get down, when you came, it squeezed from under my foot, and—and there I was!"

"I see."

He looked sternly at her, and she could see the firm lines about his mouth and eyes, and distinguish more clearly than ever the strength of his mouth and chin. Evidently he regarded her as a naughty child who had been eaves-dropping.

And indeed, in her red cap, she looked like a child.

"When we came," he went on at length in a cold voice "why didn't you call to us?"

"I had nothing to say to you."

"Has no one ever taught you that—" and then he remembered that, however childish she might look, she had certainly had on a low gown the other evening, and therefore must have some claims to being treated as a grown person.

Pam looked at him. "I did shut my eyes when—when you kissed her," she said slowly, "and I stuffed up my ears, too."

The frown that seemed to do duty as a signal of both embarrassment and thoughtfulness, as well as for the emotions frowns ordinarily bespeak, darkened again. "How old are you?" he asked.

"I'm seventeen."

"Well, I'll help you down now, Miss Yelland."

He put the block under her feet, and steadied it while she descended. Then he said, taking off his hat, "Good afternoon."

"You've no right to be so—so disgusting to me! You might have known some one would hear you! And I didn't *want* to! I was here first, too."

"That is true. You might have warned me."

"Oh, yes, *sneezed*, I suppose! I tell you I tried to get down. And anyhow it didn't seem to matter," she added relapsing into sudden thoughtfulness.

"Didn't seem to matter? What do you mean?"

"I mean—you'll *glare* at me if I tell you."

"No, I won't. Go on."

"Well, it all seemed pretty matter of fact at first."

Peele gave a short laugh, the first she had ever heard from him.

"Matter of fact! You seem to have had a wide experience in such matters."

His laughter cost him his position, for it put her at her ease, and she went on gaily as to heart, though solemn of face. "Not *very* wide, but still a little. And I must say, you are a better hand as a speech or a parliamentary row than you are at a proposal."

James Peele was used to a good deal of deference, and this remark from a slip of a girl who had every reason to be thoroughly ashamed of herself, surprised him intensely.

"What do you know about speeches and parliamentary rows?" he retorted, looking at her with a new interest in his cold eyes.

"I read them all to my G. F.—my grandfather, you know. And that's why I came down the other night, because I did *so* want to see you."

"I am flattered."

"You needn't be; I am as curious as a magpie. Well, as I was saying, we *loved* your speeches!"

"And you didn't care for—my dear child you had no business to be there at all, but some day you may see for yourself that a man is always at a great disadvantage on these occasions." After a pause he added, with a half-smile, "it is lucky that Lady Henrietta is not so hard to please as you."

Pam tore off her right glove and held out her hand.

"It *is* nice of you not to give me a wigging," she cried impulsively, "and I am sorry, though I really couldn't help it."

He took her hand and looked seriously at her as she spoke. "All right. What were you going to say?" For she had begun to speak and then relapsed into silence.

"Nothing."

"You were."

"Well, I've changed my mind.

"Come, tell me, there's a nice child. It was about me, I know."

"I won't tell you; please don't bother."

"You won't? I am as obstinate as you! You mean that you won't tell?"

"Yes."

"Tell me. I really wish to know," he urged with amused curiosity. But she shook her head.

"I'm not going to tell; now, at least; some day I may."

"Very well. Only, we'll probably never meet again, in which case——"

Pam put on her gloves. "Let's go, it's late, and," she turned as she started down the chilly stairway, "we shall surely meet again."

She was almost monkey-like at that moment, and something in her voice startled him.

"I hope so, I am sure, but how do you know?"

"Because I know. We shan't like each other particularly, for we are both too obstinate, but we shall see a good deal of each other. I am a boojum, and I know!"

Peele laughed, and as they separated, she going on to the house, he turning to the left for a turn under the trees, he looked after the slim little figure, speeding through the dusk, with another laugh of amusement. Then his thoughts returned to his own affairs.

Two days later the Duchess and her daughter, with Peele in their train, left Monks' Yeoland.

CHAPTER VII

LORD YEOLLAND was not a proud man, as proud men go and he was certainly no stickler for title. He had, however certain standards which he had inherited ready-made from his father, and up to one of these the Reverend Ceci Morecambe did not come, so that when that gentle cleric asked Richard Maxse for his daughter's hand, a month later, and Dick, who had just returned very seedy and quite penniless from his mysterious travels on the Continent, sauntered into his father-in-law's sanctum for advice, the old man's language was, Maxse afterwards told his wife, anything but academic.

"I've nothing against the parson, you see," the light-hearted father went on to his weeping daughter, "but we are all in the hands of the Lord so to say, and his lordship does not appreciate your suitor."

Poor Rosamund wept at her father, Evelyn stopped eating in public, and even Pam tried to influence her friend and ancestor in vain.

"No," shouted the old man, tormented out of his usual good humour, "I won't have it, and that is enough said. I suppose I need not give my reasons to you, Pamela?"

"Oh, if you're going to call me *Pamela!* However, before I am thrown downstairs, let me ask whether it has occurred to you that if (and he *doesn't*) Mr. Maxse doesn't object to Mr. Morecambe, you have no right to?"

It was thoroughly characteristic of the relations of the two speakers that as the one finished her question the other suddenly burst into a delighted laugh. "You little wretch! How dare you? I have no right to object to that pink-haired curate as an addition to my household? Be off, or I *will* 'kick you downstairs!'" And Pam rushed away to tell the despondent Evy that she had at least broken the back of her grandfather's evil temper.

"I made him laugh, and that is a lot gained," she asserted with a confidence by no means shared by her tearful cousin.

"He'll never consent, never in this world."

"Rubbish! Besides, what if he doesn't? You're not *his* daughter. I'd go out some fine morning and be quietly married and then come in and tell him. It would be fun to watch his face," she added reflectively.

"That's all very well, Pam, but you don't know what it is to have grown up under his thumb. And he always frightened me out of my wits."

"Rot!" Pam's vivid little face glowed with vicarious courage and romance. "Either you love Cecil enough not to mind a little raging on grandfather's part, or grandfather's cowed you so that you are *afraid* to love." Evelyn wept.

After a moment her cousin observed with some scorn, "Well, you'll have to do one thing or the other; if you are going to obey G. F. for heaven's sake blow your nose and obey him cheerfully. And if you're going to marry Cecil Morecambe—marry him. In the meantime I'm going for a walk, and if there are any messages you'd like me to give him, I'll go over to the rectory and look him up."

"Oh, Pam!" Evelyn rose and wiped her eyes. "If you aren't afraid, and *really* don't mind——"

"I'm not, and I don't mind; only hurry, for it's going to pour."

"Then—tell him that I am dreadfully unhappy and have cried my eyes out."

"Indeed, I won't tell him anything so idiotic. Don't you want to see him?"

"See him? How could I?"

"By looking at him," answered Pam impatiently. "Oh, if it was *me*, I'd show you! You have no more pluck than a white mouse; I'm ashamed of you!"

It was a curious scene; the big strongly built Evelyn reduced by her inherent weakness of will to a soft mass of blue serge huddled in a chair; opposite her, small, slight, a child still in many ways, Pam, with the lust of battle in her dark eyes, conscious strength maturing her little face.

"You can't keep the man hanging on, you know; it would be loathsome of you; you've either got to accept him and face grandfather (or else have the courage to turn tail and flee with Cecil!) or tell him definitely that he isn't worth the row, and let him go away somewhere. Decide, and I'll tell him what he is to prepare for."

But Evelyn, unable to make up her mind, took refuge in her damp handkerchief, and Pam rushed downstairs in a rage of impatience.

An hour later she rushed into the rectory and asked for Mr Cunningham.

"Mr. Cunningham is not at 'ome, miss," the maid told her.

"*H'm!* Is Mr. Morecambe in?"

Mary believed that he was; would Miss Yeoland step into the drawing-room.

Pam stepped in, and to pass the time walked up and down from window to window, her hands clasped behind her as was her habit still.

Morecambe came in, pinker and yellower than ever, it struck the self appointed ambassador.

"I have a lot of things to tell you," she began abruptly, "and as Mrs. Cunningham might interrupt, suppose we take a walk."

The Reverend Cecil, who was very young and so much like Evelyn in character as well as in colouring, that a wiser woman than Pam would have hesitated before helping him towards the winning of the object of his affections, obediently fetched his very correct clerical head-covering, and the two went forth into the windy, cloudy afternoon.

Pam told her story briefly, without glossing or blaming the conduct of any one concerned in it.

"So you see," she finished, "you'll have to persuade her to marry you, or else you'll have to clear out."

"I don't see how *I* can persuade her," was the rather forlorn answer, as if he were the last person on earth who might reasonably be supposed to have any influence over Evelyn. "If Lord Yeoland refuses his consent."

"She isn't my grandfather's child, is she?"

"No, but——"

Pam stood still, holding her face toward the wind as if in need of refreshment.

"Very well, I shall tell her, then, that you give her up and bow sweetly to my grandfather, who really hasn't the slightest right to dictate to either of you."

Poor Morecambe frowned with distress. "Oh no, Pam not that. I'll never give her up, but——"

"But you won't fight for her. Oh, *là, là*—this is awful!" The last phrase she added under her breath. "It's like trying to build a fortress out of balls of dough," she said a few minutes later, "and I'm going to stop trying. Good-bye."

Even the curate objected to being called a ball of dough, and intimated as much.

Pam laughed. "Well, I beg your pardon, only it does sicken me to see you both so helpless. If it was me, I'd make grandfather give way, or I'd run away with you."

"You forget my cloth."

"No, I don't, not a bit. Love is a funny thing," she burst out suddenly, with a childishness that brought back to the rather humiliated young man the realisation of his seven or eight years of seniority.

"Why?" he asked, with a slightly superior smile.

"Because it is so absolutely unreasonable."

This was less childlike, but he answered promptly, "My dear child, pardon my suggesting that you as yet cannot possibly know anything about it."

She turned, her lips steady, but something in her eyes that made him uneasy. "Possibly not; and yet—I have lived with it, have seen it every day of my life (except when I'm here), and—" she broke off, for she could not well tell this proper youth about Charnley Burke and his love for her mother and for herself.

It was characteristic of her that she never considered poor Ratty's passion for an instant. She herself was not yet ripe, she knew, but she resented any one's suggesting that she did not know much more about love than most of the people who considered themselves to have felt it. Maxse's careless attitude of good-natured tolerance towards his wife; her piteous subjection to him, and the nervously irritable juxtaposition of opinions existing between the Rector and Mrs. Cunningham, had not shaken her feeling that the love of her father and mother was the only real love she knew.

Morecambe was embarrassed by her allusion, and after a confused and lengthy message, the component parts of which were, as Pam immediately pointed out, quite irreconcilable with each other, he escaped, and she went on alone.

"They will dawdle and hedge until all the beauty (if there is any) is gone out of it, and then grandfather will give way, and they will marry and just jog along. Ugh!"

Disappointed and cast down, she returned home. It had begun to rain, and the wind blew cheerlessly. Suddenly she thought of her father and mother.

They were in Rome. They were fond of her, she knew, but she also knew that she was in no way necessary to them, and she realised that they were probably enjoying their idle *tête-à-tête* existence as much as if she had never been born. She was not at all bitter in her appreciation of this fact; long ago she had outgrown her childish idea of being missed by her mother, and it seemed to her, if not quite natural, yet eminently fair that she should be unnecessary to her parents.

Each human life, she thought, had a right to perfect independence of feeling. Parents necessarily provided for the material welfare of their children, and as naturally loved them. But as the child was an individual, entitled to its own life, so was the pa[illegible] It seemed to her, and she had reflected much on the subject, that the most important thing in the world is the love of the one man for the one woman, and that nothing, not even the little lives resulting from that love, should be allowed to interfere. It is the woman's right, she told herself, to love the one man best; and some day the child's turn will come if she finds her one man.

Evelyn's limp refusal to stand up for her man, and the man's diplomatic hedging had irritated Pam to an unusual degree, so that she was wound up, so to say, to the exposition in her own person, of the great truth that liberty is the highest good in the world.

CHAPTER VIII

On going in, she found two letters for herself, lying on the hall table.

Pulling off her wet gloves, she sat down on the table and opened the first. It was from the Duchess.

"'My Dear Child,—I find that I shall have to go over to Ireland for Christmas, to look after some tiresome business and to see my daughter, Lady Maria O'Reilly, who is not well. It will be rather dull, but then, life at Monks' Yeoland is no gayer, and if you will go with me I shall be glad and grateful. Henrietta is to stay at Danchester; she has, frankly, no great liking for Ireland, but then she has no sense of humour, and you have, so I think you may, on the whole, rather enjoy it. Tell your grandfather, to whom I am also writing, that I will take good care of you, and meet me in town on the tenth.

"Affectionately yours,

"Eliza Wight."

Pam's legs stopped swinging as she read. She liked the Duchess and she would go.

Then she opened the other letter. This was written on cheap glossy paper in a neat careful hand, and began: "My dear Miss Yeoland."

She did not know the writing and the stamp was English. As she read, the girl's face flushed and then paled. The letter was not long, and she read it through twice. Then, as she was about to jump down from the table, a door opened, and Lord Yeoland appeared in his self-propelling wheel-chair, his legs covered with a rug.

"Well, Pam," he called cheerily, for he had just had an interview with Evelyn, "What are you doing perched on the table like a monkey on a bough?"

"I have been reading my letters, grandfather."

"Ah! So you know. I am sorry, my dear, I hoped to have the pleasure of telling you. Well, isn't it delightful? Sir John O'Reilly has one of the best houses in Ireland—it will be the making of you. I knew Eliza would like you," he added affectionately.

"It is very kind of the Duchess," returned Pam absently; "she is a dear."

"What are you hesitating about? Clothes? That is already settled. Your aunt will take you to town to-morrow and get you a suitable outfit. Let me see—this is the third?"

"The fourth. Grandfather, read this please."

He had wheeled his chair close to the table, so without getting down from her seat she handed him her second letter.

"Who's it from? Dear me, why—what the devil has *she* to say to you?"

"Read it through."

"I can't read it, my dear; I haven't my glasses."

Handing it back to her he listened with an amused frown as she read the letter aloud:

"MY DEAR MISS YEOLAND,—Alone and sick unto death, there is no one to whom I can address myself but you. I have no relations, and my faithful servant is dead. You know, I make sure, that your father has a living wife, for I have heard that neither of them try to conceal it. I am that wife. I am Susan Kennedy, that your father married twenty-four years ago last August, in St. John's Church in Basingbrook, Wilts.

"I am not asking you for money, for I have plenty of that, but I am old and sad and paralysed in my left side, and I want some one to talk to, and I am not ashamed to own it, some one to tell me about George. His real baptized name is George, as I daresay you know. Will you come and see me? I know that your grandfather has adopted you, but you will get no hurt by coming to me, For I have always been quiet and a lady, and the Rector calls on me regularly.

"Surely it will not hurt you, whose very existence wrongs me, to come and tell me the things I want to know."

Then followed a careful direction how to find the remote village in Derbyshire, even the hours of the necessary trains being given, and the writer was Pam's sincerely, Susan Kennedy.

Lord Yeoland paused a moment before he spoke, on the cessation of Pam's voice. Then he said, "It is very pathetic, my dear."

"Yes, grandfather."

"I was always extremely sorry for the good lady," he went on, with a little smile. "She was very badly treated, and for no fault of her own. It was foolish of her to write to you, but the poor thing knew no better. You had better write her a kind letter, my dear, and you might send her—*h'm!*—some fruit and books from town."

Pam had got down from the table and folded her letter. Then she picked up her gloves and stood pulling the wet leather into shape. When the old man finished, she looked up.

"I am going, grandfather."

"Going? Where?" he asked bewildered.

"To—to—Torpington."

"Torpington?"

"To see—my father's wife."

If it had been Rosamund or Evelyn who spoke Yeoland would have uttered a short oath.

But it was Pam, so he only looked at her in silence, and then said quietly, "No, you are not going, Pam."

"Yes. You see, I must."

"You are going to Ireland with the Duchess."

"No. I shall write to the Duchess that I cannot; she will understand."

Lord Yeoland drew a deep breath. "I think that you will not deliberately disobey me, and I forbid you to go to—to see that woman."

She leaned over and laid her hand on his shoulder.

"Grandfather," she said slowly, "please don't forbid me!"

He knew what she meant, but could not admit it.

"I do forbid it."

"Then I must disobey you."

"Then—you must leave my house."

Her eyes filled with tears. "Oh, how could you!" Her pain was so sincere that his old heart contracted.

"Listen, my dear. I am very fond of you, as you know, or I would not, for the sake of my own dignity, argue with a child like you. However, here are my reasons for forbidding you to follow this kind, though foolish instinct. You are old enough to know that your mother, in going off with your father, committed an act bound to have far-reaching consequences."

"'The sins of the fathers'—and mothers—particularly the mothers," she returned soberly.

"Yes. She has made herself an outlaw for life. Beside that, which does not trouble her apparently, her outlawry rests on you as well."

"On me?"

"Yes. To a certain extent. You are not in the world's powerful eyes, on the same sound basis that Evelyn is, for example."

"I know; because I am illegitimate." Her white young face, grave with her great decision, did not change as she spoke. "I know; poor Pilly minds, but I don't."

"As yet you have not come in contact with the world. Now that you are growing up it troubles me. I wish you to be happy; I wish your brain to become what it is capable of, I wish, and I have tried, to exempt you from the almost inevitable consequences of your mother's act."

"Dear grandfather, I am very happy."

"The Duchess, because she is of higher rank, and because she is a woman, is much more powerful than I, and her taking you up can mean—anything for you. Her letter to me about you has made me happier than I have been for years. And if you refuse to go with her to Ireland, if you let slip this chance, you will have lost—more than you can yet realise, for she will not come forward again."

Pam was silent, her hands thrust into the pockets of her jacket.

"Pam, write a kind letter to that poor woman, and tell her that you cannot go to her; the Duchess would never speak to you again if you did, and she would be right; it is not fitting that you should come into contact with——"

The girl cut him short peremptorily. "I am sorry, grandfather, but I must go. And that is all rub—I mean, you are mistaken about it being fitting. *She* is all right; *I* am the—the queer person socially. I mean, she may be not a lady, but she is proper, and father and mother and I are the improper ones."

He turned his chair with an impatient movement. "I have condescended to explain to you my reasons for the command I have given you. You know the results of disobeying that command."

"Yes," she returned, her voice as hard as his, "I know."

CHAPTER IX

DICK MAXSE, lounging downstairs with his hands in his pockets, vaguely looking for something to do, met Pam on her way to her room after leaving her grandfather.

"Hello, Amelia! Where are you off to?" he cried, seizing at the chance of teasing her by way of amusement.

"Where is Aunt Rosamund?" she asked, unheeding the nickname she detested, and which seldom failed to rouse her to the anger he delighted in.

"I'm sure I haven't the remotest idea, my dear! I never do know, as you may have observed. Anything wrong?"

Pam disliked him, but she recognised in him a certain neglected cleverness which made her unconsciously wish she did not dislike him. "If I could get at your mind without the medium of your own self," she had once told him, "it wouldn't be bad fun;" and now, suddenly sitting down on the stairs, she jerked off her cap and said quietly, "I'm leaving to-morrow; that's all."

"Hello! A row with my respected *beau-papa?* Do tell me all about it, there's a good girl."

"Well—he wants me to go to Ireland with the Duchess, and I—have other plans. I am, as you know, very fond of my grandfather, but he is frightfully—*h'm!*—pig-headed."

"That he is! And you being very *firm*, you have clashed!"

In the dim light which came in through the old stained glass window on the landing, his weak, good-natured face lost many of the ugly marks his way of living had stamped on it, and the young girl felt a thrill of pity for him. "Look here, Mr. Maxse," she said suddenly, "you look awfully bad. You'll be ill if you don't take care."

"Ill! I'm nearly dead already, my dear. My liver is hopeless, you know, and as to stomach! Hard luck, isn't it?"

"It's your own fault. I say, *Uncle Dick*, if you like, and I never called you that before, why don't you stop drinking?"

Maxse waved his narrow white hands dramatically.

"Stop drinking! My dear Pam, how do you know I do drink—except milk?"

"What rot! I'm not blind—or deaf either, and they very nearly dropped you down the second flight the other morning. I heard them and peeped out. It wasn't nice, I tell you, and you looked exactly like a red-faced pig—so idiotic and blurred."

"I say! You have a nasty little tongue of your own. Better learn to hold it, my dear." He rose, flushed, and sulky.

"I know; I oughtn't to have said it, but—well you know I don't like you, and yet I can't help being sorry."

Any other woman, he reflected, would have expressed pity for his wife; it was wily of her to make no reference to that profoundly uninteresting sufferer.

"I wonder why you never liked me!" he exclaimed suddenly, sitting down again and turning to her. "I always liked you."

"No you didn't. Not really; and I don't see how you could, either," she went on with an outburst of frank laughter. "I mauled you pretty badly on one or two occasions, didn't I? But it was because you tried to kiss me."

"I wonder," he remarked with a grin, "whether you'd maul me if I tried to kiss you now?"

"You wouldn't dare to now; I'm grown-up."

"Grown-up-ness isn't usually a bar to a young female's being kissed."

"Grown-up-ness with my grandfather to back it is, though," she returned, adding with sudden gravity, "Oh, dear, I forgot, I am going away!"

"Nonsense. Go and tell him you're sorry; you don't want to go away, you know you don't."

"Of course I don't, but—what can't be cured must be *enjoyed*!"

She rose and held out her hand. "I am going, you see, and in case I don't see you again alone, Dick, good-bye, and *do* think of your liver."

From "Mr. Maxse" to "Uncle Dick" had been a great stride, and now, on hearing her call him "Dick", in a tone of perfect equality, he felt that life was cruel in taking her away at such a point. Circumstances chaining him to Monks' Yeoland for a couple of months, nothing would have pleased him better than a mild flirtation with this curiously attractive little fledgling, and now, just as she had begun to endure him (Maxse put it in this way, for he was not fatuous) and to take in him that semi-maternal interest that has more than once in this world proved a stepping-stone to more amusing things, she was off! He sighed.

"I'll try, Pam. My brute of a liver won't stand much more, anyhow, and I'm getting old."

"Rubbish! You're only fifty; that's young nowadays."

"Evelyn thinks it's second-childhood."

"Evelyn's a goose, and besides, you're her father. Well, I'm going—for a time, anyhow. If grandfather gets too bored, he'll know where to find me. Poor old G. F."

"Oh, yes, do come back; I'm sure you and I should be good friends now."

She laughed and went slowly upstairs. "I'm not so sure of that! However, good-luck to you."

She went to her room, informed the stricken Pilgrim that the great Progress was to begin a new chapter the next day, and then, looking up her aunt, gave her the same information in a few words.

Evelyn, who was weeping in the dark school-room, roused suddenly at her cousin's announcement, and blew her nose with more vigour than her forlorn aspect would have led one to give her credit for possessing. "Going away! Oh, Pam, where?"

"To a place called Torpington, in Derbyshire."

"Torpington? I never heard of it."

"Do, you dever did," mimicked Pam, waking Caliban, who was asleep in his basket near the dying fire, and sitting down on the rug. "Are you going to blub all the rest of your days, Evy?"

"Yes, I am; I mean—no, I'm not! Oh, Pam, do tell me what you are going to do there?"

"I'm going to visit a lady who is ill, and who is—connected with my family."

"But why does grandpapa object? Why won't he let you come back?"

Pam hesitated. She had never spoken to Evelyn of her mother and father, and did not care to do so.

"Grandfather wants me to go to England with the Duchess," she began slowly.

"Oh! But how perfect that would be! Did she want you to?"

"Of course she did. Did you think grandfather proposed her taking me? Don't be a silly!"

There was a short silence, during which Evelyn felt the end of her fiery nose with a gingerly finger.

"You're going to have a horrid thing there if you cry any more. I've got some Vinolia you can put on," commented Pam absently; "and look here, Evy, I've had a long talk with Dearly Belov—I mean with Cecil Morecambe. He says he'll never give you up. I'm to tell you that. Also, only he didn't say I was to tell you this—he is scared pea-green by grandfather, and doesn't dare say so much as 'boo' to him."

"It wouldn't do much good his saying 'Boo' to grandpapa, would it, Pam? I understand Cecil, and I know what he means. 'He also serves who only stands and waits!'"

Pam stared at her cousin, who uttered the words with much woe-begone dignity, and then burst into a peal of laughter.

"Oh, Cally, my cherished companion, isn't she *splendid?* Go on, Evy, do some more, I'm sure you think that is in the Bible, don't you?"

But Evelyn left the room in search of solitude and incidentally of Vinolia, and after a few minutes reflection Pam tucked Cally under her arm and set off to make one or two farewell visits.

To Cazalet, whom she found nursing a bad cold over a fire, she told the whole story, adding when she had finished it, "Of course you see that I could do nothing else."

The old steward hesitated. "It is kind and good of you to wish to go, my dear, but, after all, you owe a great deal of consideration to his lordship."

"I know I do, but I am *me*, and I have a right to live my life in my own way."

"You are only seventeen, Pam. Your life doesn't properly begin until you are really grown. As yet you are a child, and you ought to allow your grandfather to decide things for you."

She shook her head gently. "But I can't do that, Cazzy. I always have my own way; I always have. And as to being 'grown,' I fear I'll never be any bigger. I haven't grown a bit for over a year."

"I didn't mean that. Well," the old man broke off with a sigh, "you know what I mean, and there's no use in my arguing with you."

"Not a bit, dearest and best of Cazzies. I do want some tea, may I go and wake Mrs. Hamp?"

A few minutes later, as she devoured large slices of bread and jam with hearty pleasure, she returned to the subject of her departure. "We go to-morrow morning; poor old Pilly is busy packing now."

Cazalet had an idea. "Look here, my dear, will you promise me one thing?"

"Dozens, if you like."

"Well, promise me that wherever you go, you'll always take Jane Pilgrim with you."

Pam looked up from her occupation of giving bits of sugar to the monkey. "Of course I shall. I always do, you know. Imagine me without Pilly! Couldn't pack a trunk to save my life. That's an easy promise!"

Solemnly she gave him her hand on it.

"And to please your grandfather, who is so very fond of you, give in this once. Let me go and look up your Mrs. Kennedy. I'll explain it all to her."

"You couldn't take care of her, though, could you? And grandfather might object to your staying away inde finitely, even if you could. No, no Cazzy, please don't bother any more. I'm going, and there's an end to it. I'll write to you, and mind you write to me, and tell me all about my grandfather, for he's much too angry to answer my letters."

"You're going to write to him?"

She laughed, as she rose and buttoned her jacket. "Of course; he'll be bored to death without me, and he'll read my letters, though he won't answer them."

"Well, he ought at least to understand that it is a kind and womanly instinct that urges you to disobey him; a woman is never more a woman than when tending the sick."

Pam turned quickly to him. "Oh, please don't think it's that. I mean, only that! I'm not a bit womanly, and I've no more idea how to tend the sick than the Thingumbob of Thibet has. I do pity the poor woman, and besides," she hesitated, a faint flush coming to her small face, "it seems to me that she has a sort of right to me—but honestly I think it's more a sort of curiosity and—and—interest in the queer situation that makes me go."

"Curiosity!" Cazzy frowned disapprovingly.

"Yes. Not altogether, you know—it's all a jumble of motives, of course, as usual, but I *do* like change, and the more one sees of the world the more one knows. It is a queer position for me, to be staying with my father's wife. And it seems full of possibilities of interest."

"I wish you didn't look at it in that way, my dear. It seems to me that your only excuse for deliberately disobeying your grandfather——"

But she interrupted him by a stormy embrace in which he was afterwards not quite sure that he had not kissed the monkey, and a second later the house-door had slammed, and she was gone.

PART IV

CHAPTER I

PAM leaned back in her corner and looked at Pilgrim's sour visage with an amused smile. The windows were dirty and streaked with rain; she could see nothing of the flying landscape, and though perfectly satisfied with the step she had taken, she was as yet too much agitated to read.

The evening before had been very quiet, and she had spoken to no one besides Evelyn who had gone to bed with a headache, except to Burke who, hearing of her projected departure from his housekeeper, who was a sister of Mrs. Hamp, had come to see her after dinner.

As sometimes happens even to those women who have great power over men, Burke had turned the tables on her completely, the last two or three months. Pam had thought, knowing that he loved her and was, as she naïvely put it to her grandfather, only waiting for her to grow older, that the matter stood, in all simplicity, waiting for a touch from her hand to set it going.

The big man's self-control was an open book to her shrewd eyes; she saw him start at her approach, change colour at her touch. It had interested her, and when the Duchess, the Lady Henrietta, and Peele had appeared, to turn the current of her thoughts from him, she had been on the point of embarking on the alluring water of experiment with him.

The engagement of Lady Henrietta and Peele had so interested her, however, that Burke was for the time forgotten, and when, in lack of other amusement, she had turned again to him, she found, to her rather indignant surprise, a blank wall, so to speak, presented to her attack. Burke, as a matter of fact, himself aware of the strength of his own passions, and astonished by the hold that he found she had over him, had decided to keep himself in hand until the time should come when he should dare risking a declaration in form.

He was not a particularly clever man, nor was his mind a well-trained one, but he had learned a certain amount of rough wisdom in his not uneventful life, and one of his precepts, backed by a fairly strong will, was to steer clear of danger until he stood a fair chance of overcoming it.

So rather to Pam's chagrin, her tentative airs and graces had little or no effect on him, and she experienced the humiliation of finding herself suddenly relegated to the position of little girl, and slightly patronised by her father's friend.

Burke's strong vitality had always attracted her, and as is often the case with small, delicately built women, his very bulk was hardly less pleasing to her than his great physical force.

She was too natural and too strongly imbued with the Yeoland characteristic of casualness, as her grandfather put it, to even become that rare creature, a great coquette (*une grande coquette*, meaning a flirt possessing the greatness of her faults), but she was full of curiosities, and very naturally was not indisposed to play with and experiment with the big Australian's feelings.

So when she found herself quietly baulked, she had after one or two attempts to break down what she perfectly understood to be a deliberate barricade, given it up, and turned her attention to something else. Riding being the thing on her list that seemed next best, to emotional exploring, and her grandfather having given her a horse for Christmas, Burke and his sentiments soon went comparatively out of her mind, and he, unable to stand country life in England for more than a few weeks at a time, had again taken himself to town, where Dick Maxse had heard of him as doing many pleasant and amusing things.

Pam laughed to herself as she recalled his face the evening before, when she had politely inquired after the health of

Totty Barnes and Audrey Lawrence, two aspirants to dramatic fame whom she had heard Maxse mention to her grandfather in connection with Burke. It had been great fun; decidedly, playing fire was a pastime worth cultivating, and she decided to do more of it.

For Burke, upset by the news of her leaving Monks' Yeoland and possibly influenced by seeing her alone in the dimly lighted drawing-room, had greatly to her satisfaction lost his head utterly, and stammered out a few words whose tone rather than whose meaning had made her shiver with that most enchanting sensation to every woman ever created however most of them may protest, of having power.

He had caught her hand, too, and covered it with kisses, which was less agreeable, but also thrilling.

"You know what I mean, Pam," he added, wiping his brow with his handkerchief; "you've known for months, you little demon."

"I suppose I do. Why am I a little demon?"

"Ah, bah! Well—will you marry me?"

That queer vibration in his deep voice rang in her ears yet as the train slowed up at a jaded-looking little station.

She had forgotten exactly how she had refused him, but she remembered that he had not been as cast down as he might have been, a fact which she rightly explained to herself as indicating that he meant to try again some day.

"It's funny, Pilgrim," she exclaimed abruptly, as the train started again, "that as soon as one gets a thing one doesn't want it."

"It's the way of the world, Miss Pam, and a nasty troublesome way, too."

"Oh, for heaven's sake, Filly, don't *gloom*. It isn't nasty at all. It's a very clever arrangement for keeping up one's interest in life."

Pilgrim did not answer. That excellent woman was busy trying to decide whether she was glad or sorry to be again setting out on the waters of adventure. The quiet harbour had been very pleasant and no one could tell what kind of an anchorage they should find in Derbyshire, but at the same time Monks' Yeoland had what Pilgrim called, *in petto*, a sameness.

A sudden burst of laughter from the young girl put an end to these reflections by at least momentarily settling the question strongly in favour of the haven they had left.

"I really don't see 'ow you can laugh, Miss Pam, I must say," exclaimed Pilgrim now fully satisfied that she was an injured woman; "think of all the beautiful things we have left, and your beautiful bath-room, and your dear grandfather, to say nothing of your aunt and cousin! I can't understand 'ow you can laugh."

"Can't you indeed, Pilly? No, I daresay you can't. That's because you never did have any sense of humour! Yet it has it's funny side. Here are you, you see, scampering across England with a person who doesn't even exist——"

"What do you mean—a person who doesn't exist? That's silly, Miss Pam."

The girl laughed again.

"No, it isn't, it's true. I don't exist in the eyes of the law! And yet, here we are, you and I, rushing off to smooth the pillow of—my father's wife!"

"You hadn't ought to; it seems all topsy-turvy somehow. And to think that we might be going to Ireland with a Duchess!"

"I know. I *am* sorry to miss that," the girl returned, with natural youthful regret for the joys foregone, "but you see I had to choose between two things, and of course I chose the one I wanted the most. Which is why I'm not crying this moment at having left my darling, wrong-headed old grandfather."

"It will be dreadful there—in that place," returned the unfortunate Pilgrim, "after Monks' Yeoland."

"Don't let Monks' Yeoland turn your head, Pilly mine! Remember, it is not our natural sphere."

"I beg your pardon, Miss Pam, but it *is mine.* I was born there as much as any of his lordship's own servants."

Pam laughed. "I beg your pardon. Well, when we've done our duty by poor Mrs. Kennedy we'll rush off to Rome and amuse ourselves. Just think of the Pincio in the evening, just before most people know that spring has come!"

The train stopped again as she spoke and rubbing the moisture from the window with her handkerchief, she looked out into the leisurely confusion of another small country station.

"Oh, bother, here's some first-class creature—a servant in livery. They'll be sure to pop him in here! Why, Pilly, it's—" as the door opened and a man jumped into the carriage. She held out her hand to him. "Mr. Peele! How do you do?'"

Peele shook hands with her politely, but evidently, in the dusk of the wintry day, did not recognise her.

When he had sat down in the place vacated by Pilgrim, he leaned over and looked at her. "You, Miss Yeoland, how very curious."

"Yes, it's I. But what is a pillar of the State like you doing here on this obscure line?"

"I'm on my way to the end of the world," he answered. "I'm going home for Christmas."

Pam laughed. "Do you know, it never occurred to me that you had a home?"

"Didn't it? I have, however, or at least I have a house, and I happen to be fond of it though I've not been near it for years. How is Lord Yeoland?"

"Very well, thanks."

"You're not alone?"

"Yes, with my maid."

He leaned back in his seat and closed his eyes as if very tired. Clearly, having done his duty he did not mean to talk any longer. Pam, however, was of another mind.

"Why aren't you going to Danchester for Christmas?" she asked perfectly aware of the impertinence of her question.

"Because I preferred to go to Torpington," he returned coldly.

"Torpington!"

"That is the name of the town near where my house is."

"But *I* am going to Torpington!"

The frank pleasure in her voice roused him, and he sat up, looking at her as the lamp overhead burst into mediocre radiance.

"You going there? May I ask to whom?"

Her eyes sparkled. "To Mrs. Kennedy."

"Kennedy? I don't know them, I think. Are they the people who have taken Rosedale?"

"No. She lives at No. 4 Wellington Terrace."

In the pale, unsteady light she saw his face change to a look of the greatest surprise.

"Wellington Terrace? But——"

"Oh, I know. It is in the town, a hugger-mugger little villa of sorts; but there I am going. Your expression would gratify my grandfather; it's a pity he can't see it!"

"You're trying to mystify me. Go on."

He crossed his arms and dropped his head, reminding her of the first time she had seen him.

"No, I'm not. On the contrary, I am so glad that you are going to be within distance that I could play on cymbals and ortolans—or what are the things? if I had any."

"You are very kind."

"You don't think so. You are still angry with me. Please forgive me, and we'll begin over again. I am dreadfully young, but I'm really a rather nice person, and I was put into this solemn world for the relaxation and amusement of the heavy-burdened like you."

He smiled. "I am not at all angry, and I am much gratified by your kindness in being glad to see me. Now please tell me what Lord Yeoland's grand-daughter is going to do in Wellington Terrace, Torpington?"

The fun left her face with the dramatic suddenness peculiar to her changes of mood. "Come and sit by me, and I'll tell you."

He obeyed, turning his back towards Pilgrim and looking down at Pam, who puzzled him almost as much as she hoped she did.

"I am not going as Lord Yeoland's grand-daughter; I am going as—as Guy Sacheverel's daughter."

"Well? What has your father's daughter to do with Mrs. What's-her-name in Torpington?"

"Mrs. What's-her-name in Torpington is—my father's wife."

Peele started. "Good heavens! But, my dear child, what have you to do with her?"

She saw that he was almost embarrassed, and the knowledge in some curious way confused her.

She gave a nervous laugh. "I am going—*pour épater le bourgeois!*"

"But surely your grandfather——"

"Grandfather, poor dear, being the bourgeois!"

"But surely you would not put yourself in such a false position out of childish mischief."

"No, of course I shouldn't," she answered sharply. "And I love my grandfather. I am going because I must."

Taking Mrs. Kennedy's appeal from her pocket, she handed it to him, and while he read it, studied his face intently. He looked worn and ill.

At last he looked up. "It is a rather pitiful letter. You think you could not resist it?"

"I know I could not," she returned simply. "You see it was my father who hurt her so, or rather he was going to be my father."

"But now that I recall it, surely the Duchess told me that you were going to Ireland with her?"

"The Duchess counted her chickens before they were hatched."

"And Lord Yeoland——?"

"Grandfather forbade my coming; we are now no longer on speaking terms."

Peele frowned. "You mean that you deliberately disobeyed him and ran away?"

"No," she returned, her dark eyes meeting his grey ones with a gaze as steady as their own; "I mean that I am my own mistress, and that I *came* away."

"I beg your pardon. It seems a pity. Your grandfather is very fond of you."

"Yes, and I of him."

"You will hate Torpington."

"No I shan't. I like new places and new people. Then you will admit that the situation has dramatic possibilities!"

"Oh, as to that, of course. But I quite agree with Lord Yeoland that you do not belong——"

"In that galley; which happens to be the point! I belong, you see, in no galley—I am a privateer."

"Poor little privateer," he said half unconsciously, and she was silent for a moment; she decided to think about his remark later, for it meant something.

"You see I love change, and experience of any kind is a boon when you're only seventeen! How I wish I were twenty-five!"

"An unnatural wish. I say—!" he broke off suddenly, and sprang to his feet. "What on earth is that?"

She laughed, a laugh delightfully childish. "It's my monkey! Poor Cally boy, did he sit on you and squash you?"

The monkey clung to her whimpering, and she went on making little interrupted, broken, nonsensical speeches to it, as women do to despairing babies.

He sat down and watched her for a moment. She was so young, and so foolish, that she rested him, tired as he was with over-work and political worry.

"Look here, Miss Yeoland," he said at length, "if I were you I should go back to Monks Yeoland—upon my word I should."

"And if I were you—" she began, and then breaking off short.

"Well, what?"

"Nothing."

"You evidently delight in mystery; the last time I had a talk with you, you began to say something, and then refused to go on."

"Yes, silence being golden! Now please don't torment me. Some day, if you are very good—and if I haven't forgotten—I'll tell you what I was going to say. It was the same thing each time."

"Very well," he returned politely, "I shall live in that hope. The next station is Orpington."

And then, leaning back in his corner he drew his cap down over his forehead and did not speak again until they had arrived at their destination.

"Does Mrs. Kennedy know that you are coming?" he asked, as they went through the little waiting-room.

"Yes, I wired her, but I shall take a cab, as she's paralysed and can't come to meet me."

"I will take you in my carriage. Come."

She followed him in silence and in a few minutes they were ploughing through the mud of the little town, the rain maliciously whipping the windows of the brougham.

When at length the carriage stopped, Peele got out and helped the two women. "Let me take the bag; I've no footman. This seems to be the house. Ah, here comes some one."

He held out his hand and Pam, taking it, clung to it with a sudden clasp. "I—thanks for bringing us," she said hastily. She looked rather pitiful, he thought, and very young.

"I'll come and look you up soon, if I may?"

"Oh, yes, please do. It will be such a comfort to have you," she answered warmly, and then with another strong shake of his hand, followed Pilgrim into the little entry.

CHAPTER II

THE maid who opened the door led the way up the narrow stairs with its vivid carpet and bright brass rods, along the corridor to the front of the house, and paused before a door.

"That's 'er room, miss, and if you'll go on in I'll take the other lidy upstairs to your room."

"The other lady is my maid, and I'd like to go up myself before I see your mistress. We have had a long journey and I should like some hot water, please."

"Oh, very good, miss, only she said I was to bring you right away in an' she's been waiting very impatient."

Pam shrugged her shoulders. "Very well; go on upstairs, Pilgrim, I'll come in a few minutes." Then she knocked.

As the door opened, and a flood of rose-coloured light poured over her, she realised that all unconsciously she had made for herself a picture of Mrs. Kennedy and Mrs. Kennedy's room which was almost ludicrously wrong in every detail.

She had pictured the woman to whom she stood in such curious relation as a small, pale person with the beauty of patiently borne suffering in her thin face; she had expected this woman to be in a humble, scrupulously clean room by a small fire, a table covered with bottles beside her.

Instead of which she found herself accepting a kiss which smelt strongly of violet soap, from a very fat pink and white person in a carefully curled fringe, and an elaborate pink and white tea-gown, and then sitting down in the pinkest and whitest room the most virginal imagination could possibly conceive.

"Well, my dear, so you have come!"

"Yes, I have come." The girl as yet could find but few words.

There was a pause, and the "invalid," pointing with her white hand that in its puffy fatness ridiculously reminded Pam of Ratty's, exclaimed, "Oh, my dear, you have your father's feet!"

Pam drew the foot she had put on the fender back under her skirts with a confused feeling that it ought not to be like her father's; that by having such feet she was in some curious way injuring her hostess, until that lady went on cheerfully, and with a rapid change of subject evidently habitual to her; "he had beautiful feet. I knew you'd come."

Between the involuntary desire to protest against the past tenses used regarding her father and a polite wish to respond to the confidence expressed by Mrs. Kennedy, Pam muttered something quite incoherent and then aided by an inspiration, added hastily, "What a delightful room this is."

"Oh, you like it! I am glad. When one is an invalid, one's surroundings are of pariamount importance."

"Yes, indeed. May I look round a little?"

She rose and walked about. The room was long and low, and at the far end of it a great embroidered screen mounted in gilded panels concealed the bed and the washstand.

The walls were pink and white, the many cushions and the deep soft arm-chairs white and pink, and the carpet a bowery mass of large substantial roses on a fawn-coloured ground, of the same cheerful colours.

"I never leave my room any more," Mrs. Kennedy informed her, turning the many valueless rings on her hands as she spoke, her fat face broadened by a good-natured smile, "so I made it as tasty as I could. And it *is* tasty, isn't it?"

"Extremely; tasty seems to me to be the exact word," returned Pam gravely.

As she spoke the maid came in staggering under the weight of a great over-loaded tray.

"I thought I'd just have a substantial tea to-night, my dear," her hostess explained apologetically. "I suppose you always dine late, but when there's no gentlemen in the house, the ladies usually dwindle to supper, you know, and Hannah, my cook, makes very nice dishes of an evening."

Pam was hungry and the queer little meal was good. While she ate, Mrs. Kennedy babbled placidly on, telling her indeed little, but filling her tired ears with a buzzing of not unpleasant sound.

She would have, she knew, plenty to think about when she was allowed to go to bed, but in the meantime she was comfortable.

"You seem to take after the Yeolands, my dear," the invalid observed at length, rousing her guest from a half-reverie, "but you have George's eyes."

Pam had never heard her father called George and it sounded strange to her.

"Have I?" she asked, setting down her cup; "nobody ever said so before. Every one says mine are like Cal—like my monkey's."

"Well I declare! You aren't vain, are you? Yes, yours are darker than his, but then—I've seen his look—*h'm!*—tragical, too!"

Pam laughed. "Are mine tragical?"

"They are. Your hair is like his, too, but you look like your mother all the same."

"My mother is very beautiful and very blonde," shortly. "I don't look in the least like her." The remark had jarred on her, somehow.

Mrs. Kennedy laid her large head on one shoulder and brought forth a deep sigh. "I have seen her—your mother," she said in a voice ludicrously like a coo.

"Oh!"

"Yes. I see that they have never told you the truth."

"They have never told me anything at all. I'm afraid my appetite will shock you, but as a matter of fact I am ravenous."

"I am glad. Yes, my dear, I saw her. When you have finished eating I will tell you about it."

Pam's appetite wilted under this remark, as was perhaps not unnatural, and she suddenly felt an overwhelming desire for solitude.

"May I—I am very tired, you will not mind if I go to bed? It is rather late."

"Oh, certainly; you must be tired. I have not tried to thank you for coming"—Mrs. Kennedy took her hand and looked up at her—"it was good of you. To-morrow we will talk."

Then the girl, glad to be released, ran upstairs, and a little later lay staring into the darkness, thinking.

After all, she told herself, with youthful severity, Mrs. Kennedy was as old and solitary as she had written; that she was fat and dwelt in a room like a big pink bonbon had no particular bearing on the serious aspects of the case. And Pam herself had come, if half out of delight in the unusual situation, yet quite half out of a feeling that she had no alternative.

She had not reasoned the case out; she felt, brought in such sharply sudden epistolary contact with the woman her father had deserted, no equally sudden indignation against her father; she had known ever since she could remember that Mrs. Kennedy existed, and the idea contained no horror for her.

Her father, when she thought of him in connection with her visit to his wife, appeared to her inner eye as possibly disapproving, but quite certainly amused by her act.

There was in her case no conscious bowing to the dictates of Duty—a social force that she regarded merely as a tiresome bugbear; she had responded to Mrs. Kennedy's appeal, as she told Christopher Carlet, partly out of keen interest in the unusual situation, and partly because it seemed to her, in view of her father's position, that she could do nothing else. And now that she had arrived, her own disappointment in the general lack of pathos in her surroundings, and the ludicrous character of that disappointment, was by no means lost on her singularly pellucid mind.

Her last conscious thought as she dropped to sleep in the room whose blueness could be compared only to the pinkness of the one under it, was that she was a silly little idiot to be depressed by the cheerfulness of the poor woman she had come to cheer, and that she would feel better in the morning.

CHAPTER III

"OH, yes, Miss Pam, the beds is very good, and Maud, as you say, seems a smart young woman enough, but nevertheless, this 'ouse is no place for us."

Pam kicked off her bath slippers and held out one foot for the stocking Pilgrim was preparing to put on it. "There you are again, Pilly, being proud! What right have the likes of us, if you please, to turn up our nomadic noses at a comfortable nest like this?"

"I'm sure I don't know what a nomadic nose is, Miss Pam, but while mine never set up to be Grecian, I'm sure it's not *that*. And as to the 'ouse, just wait till you've seen the drawing-room."

With this dark hint the good woman withdrew into the stronghold of what Pam called her monumental silence, and the toilet proceeded leisurely. It was a fine day, and the air coming in at the wide-open window held something of spring-like softness that reminded Pam that it was the last day of March.

"I say, Pilly," she exclaimed, as her handmaid gave a last touch to her interwoven plaits, "spring is coming! Aren't you glad! Violets, and nice smelly spring mud, and new clothes! Hooray!"

"New clothes! Yes, Miss Pam, you certainly need new clothes; your last summer ones will all be too tight, even if we had 'em here, which it is we 'aven't."

Pam danced a few steps, snapping her fingers over her head. "We'll go to London some day, and buy much purple and fine linen and frankincense and tincture of myrrh. I'll write to father for money this very morning."

Pilgrim watched her sourly. The good woman had for years honestly believed herself to be not particularly fond of Pam; her love she thought was all given to Pauline But Pam possessed the great attraction of warm-heartedness she was capable of more affection in a day than her mother had felt in her whole life, barring her love; and really loving, even while she tormented her old nurse, the girl had, unconsciously to them both, called forth something like a passion of devotion in that nurse's grim breast.

“Now, Polly,” she said, stopping her dancing, “I'm going down to see Mrs. Kennedy, and afterwards for a walk; Caliban must stay with you. Oh—and before I go out I must write a few words to grandfather, poor dear; he'll be very lonely. So put the writing things in your mysterious drawing-room, will you?”

An hour later she burst into the silent sea of that gorgeous apartment, and falling on the blotting-book like a hungry dog on a bone, began to write at lightning speed, bursting into soft chuckles as her pen flew over the paper.

“DEAR GRANDFATHER,—Don't drop dead at my cheek in wishing you were here! For even though you rage and wriggle your eyebrows like the devil, I do wish it! It's all too good to be true, and it's horrible having no one to enjoy it with me!

“‘Cousin Susie’ (that's what I have to call her, and doesn't it remind you of “this man's father is my father's son!’) is perfect, and the house quite the most delicious thing in the world. But I must begin at the beginning. James Peele was in our compartment yesterday, and scolded me roundly for coming. It must be consoling to you to have every one take your side! It appears that he has a house near here. He sat on Cally (who is very homesick and sends you many kisses), but otherwise was very agreeable. We reached the house at about eight, and I was conducted at once to ‘Cousin Susie's room.’

“It is all pink; I felt as if I had crawled into a big raspberry fondant, and I must look like a fly in it, I'm so black. And she is as pink as the room, hugely fat, and curiously smooth-looking; a lovely skin gone to waste, and round blue eyes, and a sweetly curled ‘front.’ I was disappointed at first to find her so chirpy and contented, for I had got all nicely screwed up to tend the sick and smooth pillows, as Cazzy says, but since I've seen her this morning, I am more than consoled. She is so glad to have me, and to hear all about Monks' Yeoland, and everything. She hasn't said much about father yet, but she thinks I'm like him in some ways. I expected she'd cry a little over me, for I came so near being hers, you know, but she hasn't cried a tear. I think she is perfectly happy in her way, only lonely, and that she thinks of father as being still young. She was quite angry with me this morning for saying that he's getting fat. (He is, you know.)

"This room in which I'm writing is the drawing-room; all bright gilt and red stuff almost like satin. Father never lived here; she came after her 'misfortune' (that's what she calls father's running off with mother). She's lived all alone ever since the 'misfortune,' and for years she has been perfectly helpless—paralysis in the legs. All her relatives are dead. Isn't it funny, that in spite of all the sad things that have happened to the poor thing, one doesn't pity her? I tried like mad to be sorry for her when she showed me her miniature (she must have been awfully pretty!), and father's, taken just after they were married, and then I looked back at her huge rosy face and *couldn't* be sorry!

"Isn't it all topsy turvy? Now I'll go out and prowl about until I find the post-office and send this off to you. I do hope your gout is better. Don't be too angry with me, dearest G. F.; I'm not a bit angry with you any more, and I love you very much.

"PAM."

The young girl addressed her letter and then with a final glance at the splendour of the apartment, went again to her hostess' room.

Mrs. Kennedy had by this time finished her toilette and wore a rose-coloured tea-gown evidently made in Paris, and as evidently made for quite other uses than being worn by a more than middle aged paralytic in an English provincial town.

By her, a sharp contrast in her ill-made serge coat and skirt, and a flat felt hat attached to her head by the unb coming means of a narrow elastic band that had draw the scanty knot of dun-coloured hair into a Grecian pr minence eminently disadvantageous to her chinless profil sat another woman whom Mrs. Kennedy introduced to he guest as her dearest friend, Miss Botson.

Pam gave her hand to this lady, who squeezed withou shaking it, saying with a great display of teeth like an ol horse's, and a curious tremor in her voice, "I knew yo would come!"

"Did you, indeed," returned the girl, looking like he grandfather.

"Yes. Noblesse oblige. I knew you could not refuse dearest Susie's appeal!"

"Very kind of you, I'm sure. I was very glad to be able to be useful to—to any one."

Miss Botson's face again underwent the paroxysmal eclipse behind her teeth that ungenerous Nature had given her as a smile.

"Of course, to any one, and to her of all people. I said to her, didn't I, Susie. 'Anything she can do will be done, if she has a heart in her bosom.'"

Pam, rather surprised at the excitement displayed in the stranger's voice, restrained herself with something of an effort from boxing her little twisted ears, and turned to Mrs. Kennedy.

"I am going for a walk; is there anything I can do for you?"

As she spoke, her letter slipped from her hand, face upwards, and before she could reach it, Miss Botson had picked it up and returned it to her. "Your dear grandfather must miss you, I am sure."

Again Pam longed to injure her, and with a hasty bow, left the room and went out into the fresh sunny morning.

"Loathsome creature," she thought, skipping across the muddy street and turning to the left. "How she did stare at me. I shan't be able to stand much of *her*!"

The town, she found, was dismal and ugly; rows and rows of dingy houses, a cheaply-built street of unattractive shops, several churches, in which she took not the slightest interest, and then more houses. When she had found the post-office and dropped her letter into the box, she stood for a moment looking up and down the sleepy street wondering which way to go.

"I wish I could get out into a country road," she said to herself. It was a day when the most urban mind turns to rural thoughts.

A rosy-faced country woman, entering the post-office with a basket on her arm, solved the problem by telling her to cross the street and take the lane to her left. "Grey Mare Lane, Miss; the grey mare will carry you quick to our side of the town—much the finest," her informant told her, and with a laugh at the joke, Pam followed her directions.

In half an hour's time she was rushing full tilt down a deeply sunk country road, splashing through the wet clay with childish pleasure, sniffing the mild, damp air and studying the dark buds on the hedgerows with the deep though possibly passing interest of the stranger.

"Good old sky, how blue you are!"

She was only seventeen, and possessing more capacity for both joy and sorrow, than nine-tenths of the women in England that day, sang and talked to herself in her delight that winter was over.

Mrs. Kennedy was not what she should have been; Lord Yeoland was angry, and it would take more than that saucy letter to soften him; she had only six shillings in her purse; Evelyn was a donkey, and Cecil Morecambe a fool; not a soul on earth approved of her behaviour; Pilgrim was grumpy; and Miss Botson existed. All of these things were both incontrovertible and unpleasant, but what were they weighed against seventeen years and the first mild morning in the spring?

CHAPTER IV

Two or three days later Mrs. Kennedy gave Pam her version, a carefully detailed version, punctuated by a startling variety of emotional smiles and tears, of her "misfortune."

It was a dull, dark day, and the three windows, behind their rosy curtains, were grey with rain. Pam sat in a low chair by the fire, opposite her hostess who, having run the gamut of her tea-gowns, was again wearing the much-frilled one in which the girl had first seen her. Something of her early surprise at the results of a long life of misfortune and disappointment came over Pam again as she watched the complaisant pink face bending with what was perilously near being a smirk over the open drawer of the table at her elbow.

If she had ever been disposed to lament over her father's sin, the sight of his victim's comfortable person, perfectly self-satisfied in her preposterously pink setting, would doubtless have been a certain consolation; as it was, she awaited her companion's first words with a mixture of disdain and amusement.

"This pocket-book was his, Pamela; and all his letters to me are in it. Take them and read them. There ain't many."

Pam felt a pang, as she took the worn old green leather receptacle. No, she could not fancy her handsome, idle father writing many letters to this poor woman. And yet he had married her!

Half reluctantly the young girl took out the letters, each of which was in its envelope.

"Read 'em in order, my dear; I've numbered them, you see; they explain themselves."

Susan Kennedy spoke carefully, slowly, and with a certain pomp of voice. The occasion was a sort of ceremony, Pam realised, as she opened the first letter, which was addressed to Miss Susan Chiddick.

"MY DEAR MISS CHIDDICK,—I am sending you to-day the copy of Tennyson's Lyrics which you kindly said you would accept from me. Please read the marked ones. Hoping to see you to-morrow at Mrs. Brown's,

"I am, yours sincerely,

"G. KENNEDY."

The writing was larger than her father's as the girl knew it, and much more distinct. The second and third notes were much like the first, one referring to a promised walk, the other about a song she had sent him. The fourth startled her, for it began abruptly: "After the way you treated me last night I cannot venture to think that you would care to see me before I go back to London." "How had you treated him?" she asked, looking up to find Mrs. Kennedy's eyes proudly fixed on her face.

"'Orrid, my dear, *horrid*. It was a ball, and I took a fancy not to dance with him; a girl's trick. He stood in a corner and glared at me, poor dear." Her broad flabby face assumed a coquettish smile that struck Pam as very pathetic, though so ludicrous.

Without answering, the girl went back to the letter: "If I have offended you, please let me know how, that I may beg your pardon; if you were only playing with me, there is no object in my staying on here any longer. G. K."

"Proud as a peacock, wasn't he?"

"Apparently. What did you answer?"

"Read the next letter."

As she read the next one, a slow flush crept up under Pam's clear skin. It was a love-letter, full of short quotations, but also full of sincerity and happiness. Her father had really loved this woman in the offensively pink gown!

It gave her pride a shock. Then, looking up, the honest tenderness in Mrs. Kennedy's faded blue eyes touched her again. "You seem to have been very happy—then," she faltered.

"Oh, yes. We were married in August, and went to Scotland on our tour. He was very handsome then."

"And you were—lovely."

"Yes. I was a pretty girl. He was proud of me, too. Go on, read the rest."

The next letter, addressed to Mrs. George Kennedy, was written a year and a half later, and was full of great enthusiasm and hope. It described the writer's singing for a great Italian tenor, to whom one of the partners of the broker's firm in which he was a clerk had introduced him. "He says my voice is wonderful, Susie dear, and that after a couple of years' study I can command my own price, for—opera singing! Isn't it glorious, little woman?"

"You were very proud, I suppose?" asked Pam, folding the letter and returning it carefully to its yellowing envelope.

"Proud! Wasn't I? But it was the cause of the whole trouble, my dear, after all. You see, the Platts (that was the firm, Platt and Roberts) took him up and used to invite him to dinner, to have him sing for them and their friends. He had always sung like a bird, any way, and he learned no end of songs in a few months. It turned his head!"

Pam flushed again. "And then he sang in opera? His *début*, I know, was in *Faust*. Mother told me that once."

"Yes. I was there, but he had got far beyond me by that time. Not that he wasn't kind. He was always kind, but he had got used to being with great ladies, you know, and he felt the difference. And then he went to Monks' Yeoland and met your mother." She paused. It was almost ludicrously evident that all the bitterness of her desertion had long since gone; she was enjoying her own retrospective emotion, and her position as heroine of the story she told. Pam listened gravely.

"Your grandfather had met him somewhere, gone mad over his singing, and at last took him down into the country. I hadn't seen George ('e'd changed his name when he went on the stage, you know, but not legally until I refused to divorce him) for two months, but when he came back home after that visit I knew something had happened. And to do him justice, he didn't deny it. 'George,' I said, 'What is it?' And he said to me, 'Susie, my poor girl, I'm the wretchedest man in the world!' And then he told me. He wanted me to divorce 'im, you know, but I did draw the line there. And then he raged and coaxed, and coaxed and raged by turns, for weeks. At last he went down to Monks' Yeoland again and they had it out. You know the rest. What they did," added the speaker cheerfully, "blighted my life for ever."

Pam almost burst out laughing.

"Did you really care so very much?" she asked.

"Did I care? My dear, I—loved him." And the girl saw that it was the truth.

"I beg your pardon, only—you seem so—so contented now."

"Time," declared Mrs. Kennedy solemnly, "is a universal panacea."

After a moment she added, "Read the other letters. There are only two."

The first of the two was very long and written by a man nearly out of his mind with passion and pain. It was an appeal almost magnificent, to a pride that did not exist, to a generosity that few women have owned, and which certainly did not belong to the one to whom it was made. The upshot of her refusing to give him the liberty for which he begged, would be, he said, not in his returning to her, but in his shooting himself. It was for her to drive him to his death.

"Your mother, you know," began Mrs. Kennedy, when Pam had reached this point, "decided *that!* The day after I got that letter I bought my ticket (second class) and went to Monks' Yeoland. I was on my way to the house when I met her in the avenue. When I told her who I was she turned white, and then took me into a ruin near the house, where a big tree grows, and told me that for her part she did not care one straw about the divorce. It was George ('Guy' she called him) that she wanted, and that now I'd refused the divorce she would telegraph him to come and they'd go off together."

Pam nodded. "And they went."

"They did. Once they'd gone, I nearly went off my head. Of course, between she and I there was no comparison, though I was pretty, and she was ten years younger, too. But I'd loved George for years, and he was mine."

There is a good deal of truth in that simple argument "he is mine," and Pam silently acknowledged it. A minute later she added. "You went to see my grandfather I know."

"Yes. You see, I'd always heard that repentance isn't long in coming in such cases, and I thought that she was probably sick and tired of being—*h'm!—that*. George always hated tears and moping, so I thought——"

"You thought that mother would have begun to bore him with remorse! And that he'd be glad of an excuse to leave her!"

Pam's eyes shone with delighted amusement.

"Yes. It wouldn't have been the first time that it has happened. But as you know it didn't happen this time. His lordship was very pleasant, I must say."

Pam rose and went to a window to hide her face. How her grandfather would have enjoyed the recital she had just heard! The woman in question, the one who had made all the trouble by stealing the other one's husband, was the daughter of the one, the mother of the other, but they would have equally rejoiced in the unconscious absurdities of the half-pathetic victim.

"And they are still happy?"

The girl turned. "Absolutely," she returned, with emphasis. "It does seem absurdly unjust, of course, but they are both as happy as the day is long, and as good as gold."

"Good?" Mrs. Kennedy, perhaps naturally, did not understand.

"I mean kind and cheerful and generous."

Inwardly she asked herself what would have been the result of a submission on her mother's part to the laws of

God and man? She could not imagine her existing without her father, nor him without her. Would the glow of conscious virtue have given them as much as had the splendid life they had stolen?

She doubted it, or rather she was sure in her young mind that her mother, without her father, would have been a bitter, unhappy woman, a joy neither to herself nor to others.

Being herself much cleverer than Pauline could under any possible circumstances have become, the young girl wasted no thoughts on the intellectual development which might have consoled some women, nor on comfort of piety and good works.

She believed without reasoning on the subject that her mother, in developing her powers for happiness, had developed the best that was in her; and this seemed to her to be enough.

And this was what she had meant in saying that they were good.

Mrs. Kennedy was silent for a few minutes, and then with a loud sigh, took the pocket-book and laid it away in the drawer. When she had done this Pam came back to the chair in which she had been sitting, and leaning with both hands on its back, said abruptly, "And when you asked me to come, what did you want me to do?"

"To do—why—just what you have done, my dear."

"But you don't need me."

"That's what Anna said you'd say. I don't see why!"

"Who's Anna?"

"Anna Botson."

"How does Miss Botson know what I'd say? She can't have known what I was going to say, for I didn't know myself, until a minute ago."

"Well, she guessed. Anna is very sympathetic."

"Oh! Well—now that I am here—are you glad?"

Pam herself did not look particularly glad, and Mrs. Kennedy flushed.

"Of course I'm glad. It was kind of you. No, don't deny it," she added hastily, as the girl was about to speak, "it was *very* kind."

"I'm not going to deny it; I meant to be kind. Only I don't seem to be of much use. Maud is so extremely capable," she concluded appreciatively.

"You didn't expect to find me dependent on you for—for personal services? I've always lived like a lady, my dear." Mrs. Kennedy was almost offended.

"Of course not, but—I feel useless. Your letter, you see, did not prepare me for such a—a charming house, and all that."

Mrs. Kennedy bridled. "Yes; it is a genteel little place. To-morrow one or two ladies are coming to tea; that will be pleasant for you."

Pam had a horrible vision of the ladies drinking tea.

"Mrs. Nickerson is very nice; she has been in Paris twice; her husband is the dentist, and quite the gentleman."

"Yes, dentists usually have—extremely good manners," answered the girl, "they are very amiable." Then she burst out laughing at the absurdity of her own remark.

"I have a headache," she said, "I think I'll go for a walk."

Mrs. Kennedy nodded. "Yes, do," she said kindly, "the sun seems to be coming out."

CHAPTER V

THE air was warm and moist, and the lumpy ploughed fields steamed in the pleasant sun.

Pam tramped along, through the heavy clay, glad to be in the air again, glad that the rain had stopped, glad that there was a chance of finding some kind of a small flower cowering under a bank.

She did not know which flower to expect, but knew that the mild spring with its coaxing rains had waked the red earth earlier than usual, and there was pleasure in not knowing whether the first flower would be a violet or a primrose.

She was tired of thinking about her father and his erstwhile wife; she was a little home-sick for Monks' Yeoland, whence no word had come, and she had begun to think that having one's own way, though charming, can also prove a disappointment. So it was pleasant to empty her mind of thought, and hold it up to be filled by the spring day.

Presently the road took a sharp turn to the right, and crawling up a low hill stretched on again flat and gleaming in the sun, towards a small park enclosed by a rough stone wall.

"I wish that were Mr. Peele's place, and he'd come out of the gate as I pass," she thought, recalling her travelling companion for the first time. "What a brute he is not to come to look me up!" It was cooler on the upland, and she rebuttoned her jacket. "Pilly and I must go to London and get me some clothes;" she went on; "the seams of this old thing are at bursting-point, and I couldn't get into the blue one to save my life!"

She came to the corner of the old park wall as she spoke aloud to herself, and going to it drew herself up and peered over it.

The house she could see but dimly through a plantation of firs planted between it and the north-east, but its chimneys were all asmoke, and to one side of it a gardener was busy at work on a tulip bed, whistling, "Tell me, pretty maiden," a quarter of a tone flat, but joyously.

"Oh dear, there are bound to be nice people in there; girls and boys, and a jolly old grandfather, perhaps! How disgusting it is to be on the wrong side of the wall!"

Quite suddenly the sadness that is in the spring caught her by the throat, and her eyes filled with lonely tears.

The gardener was still whistling, and as she stepped back from the wall, a small dog yapped in the distance.

The house with its unknown inmates, the people who owned the dog, who were going to enjoy the tulips, inspired the girl with the greatest interest and curiosity.

"I suppose I'm homesick, because this place looks like a home," she thought. "Think I'll walk all round the wall, and perhaps I'll see some of them."

The tangle of dead grass under the wall was soaked and slippery, but she started off, stopping now and then to climb up and peer over into the enchanted unknown, full of pleasure in her idea. The house, she found, after turning the first angle of the wall, was a small, shabby old place, covered with creepers that hung fondly even from the graceful, twisted chimneys. It looked rather deserted, too, in an indefinable way.

"I believe it *is* James Peele's place," she decided suddenly, "it looks like him, somehow. Oh, there's some one in the window!"

And the man who came to the window, holding a glass of some red liquid to the light, and looking critically at it, was really no other than the Duchess's future son-in-law.

The house being set so far back from the entrance gates to which Pam was now nearly opposite, was so near the wall to which the girl clung that she at once recognised him with a laugh of pleasure, and a conscious lack of surprise. "Oh, I do hope he will see me!"

The wall was a little sunken here, and with the aid of a low beech branch, she swung herself up, and sat down opposite the window. Peele still stood at it, looking at his glass. First he tasted its contents, then he examined it again. A cross light behind him threw his slight figure into strong relief, and Pam could see even his thoughtful frown as he tasted the wine.

"Oh, please look at me!" she said aloud. "What if I waved my cap? Or I suppose I really *am* too old to do that!"

Just then Peele raised his eyes and saw her. She sat perfectly still, staring gravely back at him until he called out, "Are you a ghost?"

"I am! What is that red stuff in the glass?"

"That red stuff is wine. Will you have some?"

"No, thanks. You reminded me of Faust, staring so solemnly at it."

He laughed. "Well, this is a surprise to find you perched like a monkey on my garden wall! Though," he added, leaning out towards her, "it is not the first time I have seen you perched on a wall!"

"May I come in and see your garden?"

"May you! Please do. I'll come out."

He disappeared, and a moment later met her as she crossed the springy lawn to a freshly gravelled path.

"I am very glad to see you," he began cordially, "did you walk?"

"Of course. I've been prowling along your wall imagining the family who live here—and it's you!"

"Oh, you didn't know, then?"

She looked at him. "No—how should I have known? Did you think I came on purpose? I probably would have, however," she added carelessly, "if I had known. Oh, what a dear old porch!"

"Yes, it's a nice little house. I hadn't been near it for nearly ten years, and it's rather run down, but now, I—" he hesitated.

"Having it swept and garnished for Lady Henrietta, are you? When is the wedding to be?"

"Some time in the autumn; but I don't imagine Lady Henrietta will care much for the old place."

The gardener who was working in the front of the house looked around curiously at the new-comer, as she sat down on the base of an old sundial, and took off her hat. "It is warm to-day," she said.

"Yes, we shall have an early summer."

Peele looked worse than she had thought in the train, and she saw that his hair had grown much greyer since the winter, and that there were deep lines in his clear, colourless skin.

"You had better take a good long rest," she said abruptly, after a pause.

"I? Why? What do you mean?"

"I mean that you must have been overworking horribly to look like that."

"You're not complimentary. Do I look badly?"

"Dreadfully," with emphasis. "What is it, heart?"

"What a little wiseacre you are! No; I'm not ill, but politics is a hard trade. I've come here for the rest you advise," he went on, smiling at her, "and am taking a tonic. Would you like to see the house?"

He made the proposal as simply as he would have done to a child of ten, or to a young boy, and she accepted it in the same spirit.

Together they went into the dark old hall which was not without charm, though it had no pretensions to splendour, and into the library,—the room where he had been when he discovered her.

"The drawing-room is quite dismantled; my mother died when I was born, and no one has lived in it since; this was my father's room, and I like it, too."

It was a low room lined with books and furnished with old-fashioned comfort. Papers and pamphlets lay about on the tables, and even on the chairs.

"It is comfy; only—is this the way you rest?" she asked, waving her hand at the signs of mental work.

"I can't idle, and to knit I am ashamed," he answered, "you have no idea what a pull it is to me, to have to come here and—stagnate," she started at the sudden passion in his voice; his face had stiffened into the cold mask it had been that evening when she had first seen him, and she suddenly felt very young, and very insignificant, as she realised the political importance that he evidently felt himself to be risking by this enforced retirement.

"Tired people can't do good work," she ventured with a slight hesitation. "You have seen a doctor?"

"Of course I have," he cried irritably, "should I be here unless I had been sent, do you think?"

Then he went on, emptying a chair of its papers, "Do sit down, you have had a long walk."

She obeyed, sitting quietly, frowning at her clasped hands. She had come in to see the house, but they had both forgotten that. He was again fighting against the despair he had tried to forget, and she was thinking what she could say to influence him to take the so imperatively needed rest, and wondering at the sudden feeling of intimacy with him.

"What does Lady Henrietta think about it all?" she asked at length.

"About what? My health? I'm sure I don't know, or rather she doesn't know that there's anything wrong."

Pam stared. "You mean that you haven't told her you are ill? For you are ill, and I must have been blind not to see it, even in the dark carriage the other evening."

"No, I have not told her! What good would it do?" He rose and walked restlessly about the narrow room. "She couldn't help it, could she?"

"No. But she—oh, I'd hate you for it if it were me! You ought to tell her!"

"Nonsense. Come, I was going to show you the pictures, wasn't I?"

She rose, frowning. "Bother the pictures. Look here, Mr. Peele, why don't you tell her? You are horribly lonely, and it's frightful to be lonely when one's ill. She and the Duchess have a right to come and look after you!"

She seemed very childish in her vehemence, and his dark face softened to a smile as he watched her. "My dear Miss Pam, please don't scold me. I am tired out, that's all, and I want quiet, and the solitude you abhor. That's why I ran away here without telling any one—not even Lady Henrietta. Now come, I have a Reynolds I want to show you."

She followed him slowly up the shallow, uncarpeted stairs, and into a long narrow gallery lined with pictures. Peele opened a window letting in a gush of sweet air and a long streak of sunlight.

"Oh, there it is!" Pam loved pictures, and the Reynolds was a charming one of a charming woman, but her brain was too busy to follow her eyes, and she stood in front of the canvas staring vacantly at it.

"Well! You like it?"

"Yes, very much. Oh, dear!"

"What is it? what is the matter?" he asked, in some alarm, for her face was full of acute distress, and he did not connect it with himself.

"Nothing. Only I *wish* you'd tell her! Doesn't she know where you are?"

He sighed impatiently. "What a pertinacious person you are! No. As you insist on having information, I will tell you that Lady Henrietta, as well as every one else who has any interest in me, believes me to be on the Continent."

"Oh, I see." Her voice had changed from a tone of helpless anxiety to one of complete comprehension.

"What do you mean?" he asked, wondering.

"I mean that I understand. You wanted a *complete change*. Well, I am a change, so I hope you won't mind *my* coming some times to look you up?"

"I shall be profoundly grateful," he returned laughing. "Will you stay and lunch with me to-day?"

This, however, she refused to do, and soon after took her leave.

Peele walked with her to the gateway on the high road, and when she had gone, stood looking after her as she sped along in the sun. She had interested him, in spite of her persistence, or rather, she had for a time kept his mind from working hopelessly on in its treadmill of thought, and thus had rested him.

"A funny little creature," he thought, turning back under the trees, "and I quite forgot to ask her how she is getting on with her father's wife!"

CHAPTER VII

"VILLA ARCADIE, *April* 6.

"MY DEAR PAM,—We have just come back from a prowl in Andalusia, and so your letter reached me only yesterday. My dear child, I hardly know what to say to you. Undoubtedly, you should have obeyed your grandfather, and not gone to Torpington, but then, on the other hand, you were in a position to judge for yourself, for all the facts of the case were known to you. Neither your mother nor I feel that we have a right to exact obedience from you. Rightly or wrongly, we have allowed you always to do as you think best, and I am convinced, as a matter of fact, that you possess a greater share of that most uncommon quality called common sense, than either she or I. You are in a curious position, of course, but Susan Kennedy, I am sure, is still the excellent woman she always was, and your sojourn with her cannot hurt you in any real sense. That you have quarrelled with your grandfather is a great pity, but on the whole I feel that as the step is now *un fait accompli*, there remains for me nothing to do, beyond assuring you what you already know, that when Mrs. Kennedy has had enough of you, we shall be delighted to see you back here. The garden is already enchanting, and the whole world seems full of the smell of violets!

"Your affectionate father,
"G. S."

"*P.S.*—I enclose a cheque for some clothes. Your mother, who sends you her love, sends you one or two London addresses, and bids you have new stays made before you look up the dressmaker."

Pam sat on the end of Peele's library table, and swung her feet while he, lying on a couch by the fire, read the letter. It was raining hard, and in place of her boots, which were drying, she had on a pair of his slippers, and as she studied his incredulous face she amused herself by swinging the things on her toes and catching them at the last moment.

"Well, upon my word!" he exclaimed at length, folding it and handing it back to her, "that is certainly the most extraordinary letter I ever read in my life. The man must be crazy," he added not quite under his breath.

Pam laughed. "He isn't, though. He is much saner than you, for instance!"

"Am I not sane?" He looked up at her, an amused light in his keen eyes. "I have always been under the impression that I was particularly *terre-à-terre* and well-balanced!"

"*Terre-à-terre*—well, yes, I suppose you are that, but well-balanced? Oh, no," she continued gravely, dropping one of the slippers and getting down to pick it up. "If you were, you wouldn't be eating your heart out over a few weeks of enforced rest."

"Eating my heart out! Yes, that is about what I am doing. It would be useless to try to explain to you what it means to a man who craves for exactly one thing on God's earth, to have to watch that one thing slip out of his hand because he's too weak physically to hold it!"

Neither of them noticed the strangeness of his speaking to her in this way.

"Political power. Well, when you're rested you will go prancing back as fresh as a daisy, find the others all knocked up, and sail in and demolish them!"

He laughed. "What a mixture of metaphors, my dear Pam! Imagine a daisy first prancing, and then sailing, and then demolishing!"

"I don't care. Anyhow, it made you laugh!"

"You are a kind little thing to care whether I laugh or cry!"

She sat down by the fire and propped her chin in her hands. "I do care; I care a lot. It makes me ache all over to have you be so mis'able."

"And so you take the trouble to tramp all the way out here almost every day, to cheer me up. I see through you!"

There was a short pause, after which she began thoughtfully, "I wish you had a mother, you do so need one!"

"A mother! My dear, I've never had one. She died the day I was born."

"I know. And perhaps that's why you need her so dreadfully. You see, if you had had her, you could at least remember. It is very beautiful to have happiness to remember."

Her small face looked suddenly old and tragic as she spoke. Genius may be said to be the gift of expressing feeling—even the feelings one has never known one's self, and to a certain extent, the gift, or the curse, whichever it may be, was hers.

"I hope you have happiness to remember?" he asked, with a thrill of pity for her unknown future. She was so utterly alone on the big water of youth, with her poor little ballast of philosophy.

"I? Oh, yes. Only you see, my mother is different. If I could make one for you, I'd have her——"

"Go on. Tell me what kind of a mother you'd make for me," urged the weary man; "I'd like to know."

Pam went on, her quiet voice speaking in short disconnected sentences, the only break in the quiet of the dusky room.

"Well, she should be like most women, not very fond of her husband. So she'd have loved you the most always. She would be patient and gentle. And she would take care of you, and—fuss a little. And you'd be proud to tell her the good things you do, and ashamed of the bad things. But you'd tell her the bad ones too, because she'd love you so that she'd understand. And she would not be beautiful, and her hair would be nice and grey, and thin on top, under a little cap. And she'd be a sewing woman, and she'd love going to church. And she'd have dear kind wrinkles, like Cazzy. And she'd never be in a hurry——"

"Where did you know her, Pam?" he asked quietly, opening his eyes. "Because if she lives, I must have her."

"I never knew her; I just imagined her." To his surprise her voice shook, and she bit her lip fiercely.

Peele understood. In describing his need, she had come to feel her own. The curious aloofness of the letter she had let him read, came back to his mind with a shock. She was as lonely as he, and she was not yet eighteen!

"I wish she was my mother, dear, and yours, too," he said kindly, closing his hand over hers. "You need her as much as I."

For several seconds she battled visibly with what in almost any other girl of her age would have been a flood of tears, and then she conquered, and sat quiet, not even acknowledging the drops on her cheeks by wiping them away.

"I wish you could see my mother," she said then very steadily. "She is the most beautiful woman in the world."

He, the reserved, resented her thus shutting him out "I have no doubt of it," he answered, "and she sends you a list of dressmakers in your father's letter!"

"I asked her for the list. And she *does* love me, in her way."

"Her way is not the way of the imaginary mother you made for me!"

"No. But—I don't care. Only once in a while, when—when it rains, *and I'm hungry—!*" She burst ou laughing at this ingenious invention, as she sprang up and gave a hurried jerk to the old-fashioned bell-rope near the door.

"I am sorry! You must be starving, and it's pas five! Ah, Pam, my imaginary mother would not have forgotten tea!"

Pam nodded gaily. "No, bless her! Now *do* lie down again: I should die of fright if you should faint."

"How do you know I fainted?"

"Mrs. Johnson told me. She evidently thinks it very elegant of you; she beamed with pride!"

"It may be elegant," he returned gloomily, "but it' ommon unpleasant. Bring in tea, will you, Mrs. Johnson, l some jam or something, please. Miss Yeoland is rving."

A moment later, he said suddenly, "To go back to the ter; how long are you going to stay on in Torpington?"

'I don't know. She likes me, poor thing. I've been ding aloud to her the last two or three days; I'm ding her 'Molly Bawn,' and she loves it. Grandfather s not written to me. I suppose in a little while I shall t pack up and go back to Arcadia."

'To Arcadia? Do you come from there, young madam?"

They looked gravely at each other. "Yes; I was born re. My father and mother live there, but I—I don't lly belong, you see."

'What do you mean?"

'I mean that I just chanced to stray in, so to speak, and have a fight, one has to—to force the barriers—to win 's way in."

The thoughtful little speech was so utterly at variance h her childlike appearance as she sat huddled close the fire that he started. From time to time she said nething that reminded him that she was on the brink womanhood, but as a rule she seemed the child she ked.

'How does one win one's way in, Pam?" he asked, er a pause. "I should like to go."

She shook her head slowly. "No, you can never go."

'I? Why not? What have I done?"

She hesitated. "I am talking nonsense; hunger is ng its dire work." But she had meant something, l he knew it.

'Look here, this is the third time you have done that! nean, refused to go on with something you had begun to ! It is absurd!"

He sat up and faced her, the little intent frown she ays associated with her first sight of him, on his black ows.

'Why can't I go to Arcadia?"

Mrs. Johnson, entering laden with a generously pro-led tea-tray, interrupted him, but when she had gone, and Pam was peering with that supernatural air wisdom common to some women at such moments, int the teapot, he returned to the charge. "Well, wh can't I ?"

"Why can't you what ?" she returned provokingly.

"Why can't I go to Arcadia ?"

She evaded him for a few moments, parrying his patientl repeated question with quick-witted thrusts of irrelevancy but at last, when he had put it to her too many times "Why can't I go to Arcadia ?" she burst forth, settin her cup down with a little crash, "because you are goin to marry a woman you don't love."

He was silent for a moment, looking at her, the frow deepening. "How do you know I don't—love Henriett Shanklin ?" he asked at length.

"Because, as I told you, I have lived my childhood i Arcadia, and I have seen love all my life."

After another pause he said quietly, "I am very fon of her, Pam."

"I know ! Oh, I am sure you are. She is so beautiful and so—so—dear ! Of course you are fond of her."

"But that won't take me to Arcadia ?"

Love had had very little place in his cool brain ; he wa perfectly satisfied with his proposed marriage, and sentimental considerations had never preoccupied him. Yet he felt a trifle hurt at being thus shut out.

"No, not to father's and mother's Arcadia," she answered.

CHAPTER VII

James Peele's sudden departure, ostensibly for the Continent, had caused not a little talk among political people, for with the curious shame sometimes felt by healthy men in a sudden illness which cannot be tabulated by some distinct name such as typhoid, or pneumonia, he had given no explanation to any one.

"I am off to France on business," he had told his political chief. Possibly, for he was not a fool, the true explanation might in this one case have been made, had not something in that great personage's eyes betrayed the understanding which tact forbade his putting into words. "Indeed, Peele. I shall miss you," was all he had said, "but I've no doubt your going is necessary. Take care of yourself."

Then the two, the man arrived, and the man bent in the teeth of ten thousand bristling difficulties, on arriving, had shaken hands and separated.

Peele, shut up in his lonely old house, eating his heart out, as Pam had put it, followed the directions of his doctor with dull accuracy, and counteracted their effects by reading every day in a dozen different papers an account of the crisis which had come just when he could play no part in it.

The doctor had told him the whole truth about his condition. His heart was weak, and he was on the verge of an absolute nervous breakdown which could be avoided only in one way.

And unwillingly, rebelliously, he had taken that way, having in it none of the faith which is in itself quite the third of such cures as his doctor was trying to accomplish.

"I shall go off in a fainting fit some day," he thought, "and if I don't, I shall become a chronic invalid, which is worse."

And in the meantime the Liberals were going out, and as his party, which he knew he had served not only faithfully but brilliantly, came in, the plum that should have been his would pop into another mouth. Ambition was the only thing the man had in the world, and as he paced the gardens of his prison by day, and the long narrow room in which he lived, at night, he was to be pitied.

The Lady Henrietta, she who was to keep him out of Arcadia, and who believed him to be in Cannes or Mentone, wrote him regularly through his bankers, and once in a while he wrote her.

Hers was not intellectually a richly endowed nature, but she was gentle and kind, and she loved him.

She loved him, and though he had as much from a fear of having to live up to a once-started *pose*, as from a sense of honour, made no pretence of loving her, he was man enough to be, somewhere in the rarely stirred depths of his soul, ashamed of himself for having asked to marry him a woman whose letters awoke in him nothing more than a feeling of bored pity.

He recognised the hardness of his own nature; the coldness of what books had taught him to call his heart, and he wondered quite honestly what it was in him that had awakened in the spoiled beauty of many seasons, the love which had suggested to him the idea of using her as a help in his career.

The man felt in himself that quiet strength, that absolute reliance in tried powers, which under certain favourable circumstances can take one to any heights, and those circumstances would to a great extent become his on his marriage with the sister of the Duke of Wight.

The duke himself, a youth on marrying whom all the ladies of the London Variety theatres seemed strangely bent, was as of little importance in any way as a careful course of senseless dissipation could render him, but at the same time, to be an English duke is to be a power, and a nephewship by marriage with the man almost bound to be the next Prime Minister is an advantage for which an ambitious, comparatively obscure man, may well give a long price.

The Lady Henrietta, moreover, with her beauty and her large fortune, would have been a great help even without her title and position, and the fact that she was, at thirty, still considered one of the greatest beauties in England had its place in the lists of the advantages Peele had won so easily that day in the old Refectory at Monks' Yeoland. The man knew he was wonderfully lucky, and as he was a man, it was pleasant to him that his wife was not to be a bony frump or a fat Jewess. He was very content, but at the same time, as the days went on, as the political field became more animated and the inevitable battle drew near, he would have given up his *fiancée* with all her accruements for a fortnight of the health to which he had, in all the thirty odd years that had been his, not thrown the tribute of a grateful thought.

For he was a born fighter. The excitement of animated debate thrilled him to his finger-tips, and his nervous mind was never clearer than when the smoke of wordy battle filled the air.

He was poor, but for the joy of having his own eloquent words rush over and burn the great man whose unguarded phrase had laid him open to Peele's attack, he had cheerfully paid the heavy fine that had been imposed on him. And now, when he was filled to the lips with wisdom, as he thought, and of knowledge, as he knew, on the question that was dividing England that spring into two great camps, here he was down in the country, nursing a weak heart and resting an over-worked nervous system!

Pam, with her wits and ready sympathy, was the only gleam of sun in his dreary outlook.

Taking her visits to him as much for granted as those she had made to Christopher Cazalet, enjoying her long talks with him, making him laugh, making him think of something beside his lamed existence, she was the greatest possible boon to him. So old in some ways, her slight figure, not quite long skirts, and the boyish sailor hat she usually wore, made her seem to him a child, as he, with his pre-occupation, the speeches she had read aloud to her grandfather, the fact of his engagement to the ancient Lady Henrietta, and his rapidly whitening hair, was to her old.

Once on his remarking incidentally in the course of a conversation that he was five-and-thirty, she had exclaimed bluntly, "Are you really no older than that? Why, I thought you years older than Charnley Burke, and he is forty-three!"

"Did you indeed? That is a blow! And who is Charnley Burke? Not the man who has bought the Rosedale ruby?"

"Ruby? Has he bought one? Oh!" The colour rushed to her face at the thought, for there was only one person for whom Burke would buy a ruby, and she knew it. "He's an Australian, and a friend of ours. What is the Rosedale ruby?"

Peele laughed. "Make him show it to you; it's worth seeing. Belonged to poor little Lady Rosedale, and they sold it after her death, to pay her debts. They say this man Burke gave £15,000 for it."

Pam was silent. It was a pity that she could not fall in love with Burke, he was so nice, and so big, and so strong, and so good-tempered, and—so rich. With a sigh, she dismissed the subject from her thoughts as a regrettable but absolutely unchangeable fact.

Two or three days after the talk about Arcadia, feeling a little better and unutterably bored, Peele decided, as Pam did not come to him, to drive into town and look her up.

A long letter from the Lady Henrietta, reproaching him tenderly for not being in England just when he could be so useful and derive so much benefit, as well, from the breaking up of the Liberal party, had irritated him unspeakably, and a political blunder had been made that almost brought tears of anger to his eyes.

Pam would cheer him up.

When he reached the commonplace little house in Wellington Terrace, he found the curtains drawn and lights behind them, though it was as yet broad daylight.

Maud, the maid, in a rather fetching cap and apron, informed him, with something like a giggle, that Miss Yeoland was in the drawing-room, and led the way to that triumph of local upholstery, whence a sound of mild revelry came through the door.

"Mr. Peele."

There was a sudden hush, and seventeen women and one man turned and paid the very much annoyed newcomer the tribute of a silent stare. "Oh, it's you! I *am* glad to see you." Pam came up, her hand held out, her eyes dancing. "We're having a party, you see—a most delightful party. Come and let me introduce you to Cousin Susie."

Conversation had begun again, but the seventeen ladies drew back with eager politeness to make way for the distinguished guest, and at the end of the vista he found himself bowing before his hostess, who, pinker and whiter than ever, in a cap comprised of tiny velvet roses, and a flowing garment of pink silk covered with lace, gave him a most cordial welcome. "Delighted to see you, Mr. Peele, I'm sure. It gives me great pleasure. Allow me to introduce you to my dear friend, Miss Botson, whose book on fern-culture you must have read."

Miss Botson's hand was moist, her teeth were equine; he did not like her. Neither did he like Mrs. White, a very tall person with a large crumb of cake on her unfashionably high, purple mohair bosom.

"Thanks, I should like a cup of tea, Pam," he said, catching at a chance of a withdrawal from his immediate surroundings.

"My tea-table is in the corner there; come along."

He followed her with an absent-minded expression very creditable in a man on whom eighteen pairs of eyes are tenderly glued.

"What the deuce are they all staring at me so for?" he asked nervously, sinking into a chair after jerking it around so that his back was to the room. "I never was so uncomfortable in my life!"

"Never mind—it is compli[illegible], you know. Aren't they wonderful? They've all been here for over an hour, and they're *going to stay to supper!*"

"To *supper?* Good Lord!"

"Yes. I ache with laughing inside; they are too funny.

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Every single one of them has asked for my 'grandfather, Lord Yeoland's' health. I've had such fun, done all my tricks; recited, showed them Caliban, told them about the Duchess—*you know!* They are having the time of their lives."

"It's awful," he groaned. "More cream, please. I say, Pam, why haven't you been to see me?"

"No time. I've been busy. It takes time to stone enough raisins for a party, I tell you!"

"They aren't going to have raisins for supper, are they?"

"They are—in cakes and in puddings. Then I've done almonds, and counted silver. It's really fun, you know, you needn't look so disgusted!"

"I was horribly ill yesterday," he said pathetically; "if you desert me, I shall cut my throat—Aha! another man!" he broke off, adding with malicious satisfaction, "now, *he*'ll catch it!"

"Not he. That's Mr. Nickerson the dentist. They have all had the privilege of gazing at him by the hour while he does things to their teeth; he isn't a stranger. Oh, Mr. Nickerson, how do you do? Let me give you a cup of tea!"

Peele yielded up his place to the mild-mannered dentist, and wandered back to Mrs. Kennedy. He could not leave until he had had another talk with Pam, whom he saw to his rather indignant surprise, was really enjoying herself.

"I am so glad," Mrs. Kennedy began hospitably, "that you happened to drop in to-day, when I had these few friends to meet Pamela. I suppose you are an old friend?"

"Hardly that, but a good one, I hope."

"Met 'er at 'is lordship's, I daresay?"

Her h's had been irreproachable the first part of the afternoon, but she was tired.

"Yes, I was visiting in the neighbourhood."

Miss Botson, who was sitting by her friend, at this point leaned forward and said with an air of mystery, "Of course you know the *story?*"

Peele stared. "What story?"

"Oh, hush now, Anna," put in Mrs. Kennedy, "Mr. Peele can't be expected to take an interest——"

"He *can* be expected to. Any one with a heart in his boosom must take an interest in it. I was referring," the gaunt woman went on, "to the story of my dear friend's misfortune."

Peele rose. He knew from Pam that this phrase referred to her father's forcible escape from the bonds which seemed to him at that moment to have been quite unbearable, and he did not care to have the story repeated to him by the narrow tongue clicking against the horrible yellow teeth of the confidential friend. "I am sorry," he said hastily, "I must go on now. Charmed to have had the pleasure."

After a hurried word with Pam who was, as he put it to himself, with unreasonable disgust, making herself agreeable to the dentist, he escaped.

CHAPTER VIII

APRIL passed and May. Pam had enjoyed the reality of primroses and violets almost as much as she had enjoyed them in imagination. She and Pilgrim had spent a week in London, at a small hotel in Albemarle Street, and occupied themselves, while her simple clothes were being made, with a course of picture-galleries and long walks possibly less amusing to the sourly patient servant than to her mistress.

Then somewhat to Pam's surprise, they had come back to Torpington, and stayed on there.

The amusement inspired in her by Mrs. Kennedy's friends had given way to a mild resignation to their pretentious dulness: Miss [illegible], who came constantly, was as obnoxious as ever, and she still felt quite a superfluous member of the little household; yet she stayed on.

"Are we going to live here for the rest of our days?" Pilgrim asked her once peevishly. "I can't see that we're doing any one any good, I'm sure!"

"Nonsense, Pilly. She likes to have us, and I do read aloud to her. Besides, I'm not so proud as you; I *like* it."

Pilgrim sniffed. "And your father and mother in Paris, having a lovely time!"

"I never liked Paris, you know. Now, for heaven's sake, don't sulk—think what a bad example you're setting Cally."

Pam asked herself again, when the good woman had left the room, why she did stay on in Torpington, and then decided suddenly that it must be Peele's presence that made her reluctant to leave.

"I certainly couldn't stand it if he were not here," she decided frankly. "He *is* a dear!"

Peele grew better as time wore on; he slept more and his fainting fits had ceased. Every two or three days the girl tramped over the now familiar road to his house, and during the long hours which they spent, free from interruption, in the charming old park, or in the library, a curious intimacy had grown up between them.

"The night I first saw you," she told him once, "you stood leaning against the wall, listening to Lady Henrietta's playing, and I was opposite you, just beyond the *portières*. I had read all your speeches, you know, and heard all about the row in the House, and I was crazy to see you."

"Well, did I come up to your expectations?" he asked, puffing at his pipe as he lay on his back on the warm grass.

"Yes. You did then. You looked so stern, and so strong, and so cold."

"Dear me! Why the invidious emphasis on the 'then'? Do I disappoint you now?"

She looked at him thoughtfully. "No-o. But you see, a man who is ill is more or less a child, and makes a girl feel old and motherly."

"In other words, familiarity breeds contempt!"

"No it doesn't. It kills awe, though."

"Did I use to inspire awe?"

"Yes, in me, at least. And now—I'm just very fond of you."

Peele stretched out his hand and stroked hers affectionately. "Good little Pam!"

No letter had come from Lord Yeoland, but Evelyn had written, and Cazalet. These letters Pam read aloud to Peele, who in turn read her bits from the Lady Henrietta's and those from various political friends, and the discussion arising from them all helped to draw closer together the strangely assorted friends.

Evelyn's wails over her grandfather's cruelty regarding her curate, led to a conversation that was not without its consequences.

"He's a sweetly pretty youth," Pam informed her friend, "with a cupid's-bow mouth and pink gums; he is fond of her, I suppose, but he's afraid to go to my grandfather, and put that obstinate old man into his proper place. So, as Evy shakes in her shoes at grandfather's very voice, they both of them mourn in respectful obedience, and old Time is still a-flying!"

Then she told the story of her attempt to stir the mild curate to rebellion. "I told him that if it was me,'' she added, with her habitual disregard for grammatical pedantry, "I'd run away with him like a shot."

"Would you really have been so bold?" Peele asked laughing.

"Wouldn't I? I don't mean with a curate like him, but—if I happened to be in love with any one, and some one interfered."

"Your grandfather has a certain right to directing your destinies—yours and Miss Maxse's."

"Rubbish! Haven't we both our own father and mother? My grandfather is simply an old tyrant—yes, he *is* an old tyrant! Look at him now, sulking with me because I wouldn't obey him. I've written him three times, charming, chatty letters, and I shan't budge to go to him until he has written me three times."

"He may never write."

She laughed. "Oh yes, he will. Poor dear Aunt Rosamund and Evy do bore him so that he almost dies; he's longing for me by this time. I know him."

"And if he forbade you marrying some chap you wanted to, you'd defy him too?"

She shook her head slowly. "No," she answered with the air of one about to make a weighty announcement, "not exactly. I don't believe in marriage."

"By Jove! Not believe in marriage? May I ask why?"

She did not answer for a moment, and he went on. "You believe in love, I know, for I remember a wigging you gave me about Arcadia."

"Yes. I do believe in love—of course, I do. If you knew my father and mother, Mr. Peele, you would not have had to ask me that."

"Well, then, why not in marriage?"

"Because marriage seems to me to be so hampered and harrowed by a thousand humdrum cares, and—superstitions; because married people squabble, or get over being in love; because the very fact that one has sworn to keep on feeling a certain way is bound to make one change. Imagine vowing in church to hate and loathe your bitterest enemy all the rest of your life, and then trying to do it! It stands to reason that you'd begin to like him before you had got out of the church door!"

Peele was silent for a few seconds. Her words expressed his own feelings with a clearness he had never dared to use, and his thoughts had flown as the crow flies, to the Lady Henrietta and his own future.

"I think," the girl went on, her hands, full of flowers, clasping her knees, her eyes half closed with intentness, "that people who love each other *need* no promises."

"You are not the first, my dear, to advance that theory, but it won't hold water. Laws have to exist, you see. If there were no marriage there could be no social order. The minute two people got tired of each other, off they would go, each his or her own way, and—the children in the nursery, what would become of them?"

"It seems to me that people do about that when they *are* married. If Lady Lloyd-Venn hadn't been chained down to Sir Dick, she would never for a moment have dreamed of falling in love with that nasty Captain Bentinck! Every one knows that a bird in the bush is worth a dozen in the hand!"

Peele burst out laughing. "'Out of the mouths of babes!' But what about the one of the pair who might happen to be satisfied with his bargain?"

"Like poor Mrs. Kennedy. Well, she is perfectly happy now; much happier than if mother had not had the courage o just go off with father. Think how wretched Mrs. Kennedy would have been if he had stayed with her by force, nd loathed her, as he would have, after knowing mother."

Peele had not thought of this case, and felt a slight discomfort as she enlarged on it. "Your father's and nother's case is most exceptional," he said rising. "It s the only one of the kind of which I have ever heard hat has not turned out badly for every one concerned."

"Well, if I ever fall in love with any one, you'll hear of another case, for I'm never going to make any idiotic promises."

"You must feel yourself to be singularly inconstant, then!"

"I'm not," she flashed back angrily. "But how can I tell how I'll feel in ten years? Just wait, Mr. Peele, you and I. You are going to make a splendid *mariage de convenance*, and I shall never marry at all. Let's see which of us turns out the happiest."

"And if," he hesitated, "you should have children? Don't you see?" It seemed to him unutterably pathetic the way, as he put his question, she opened her eyes in surprise.

"Well, didn't they—father and mother—have me?"

The only letters Pam did not show to her friend, were two which had come from Burke.

His big, strong, coarse, writing was so like himself that the girl seemed to see him as she read the short sentences he had poured on to the paper, hot from his heart.

"If you knew how I miss you! The spring air gets into my throat and seems to choke me because you are not here. Let me come to you, Pam! Marry me, and let me take you off somewhere—anywhere you want to go. Cazalet is sending this to you, but he refuses to give me your address. It is cruel. I love you, and I have a right to know where you are. I go often to see your grandfather, but I don't care to ask him where you are. He is very well, but very lonely. We talk about you, for he loves you too. He told me yesterday that he had hoped to marry you to some man of good blood, that the Duchess would have helped, but that now you have ruined your prospects by this insane folly. Thank God for it! You weren't made to be a fine lady, the wife of some little fashionable whippersnapper. You have too many red corpuscles, my girl. Love me! I'll teach you what life is and can be. Can't you love me? Oh, Pam, doesn't it mean anything to you to make a man grow giddy with the very thought of you?"

The rest of the letter, and part of the one which came later, was in the same strain. She read them with a curious feeling that they were not meant for her. Her own coldness debarred her from all right to them. Poor Charnley Burke, he was not "the man" of whom Ravaglia had told her.

The second letter, received early in June together with the second she had had from her mother since she had left home, announced that the writer had been cabled for from Australia. "I must go," he wrote in a hand somewhat unsteady, "and God knows when I can get back. Something has gone wrong with my bank. Oh, little Pam, little girl, I am so utterly your slave! Be kind to me and let me see you."

After a little reflection she wrote him a line giving him her address, and putting on her hat, posted her note.

Then as was her habit, she went back past the house and out on to the road leading to Peele's.

"It was very nice of him," she thought, as she flew along in her peculiarly light-footed way, over the dusty road, "never to try to *éblouir* me with the ruby! Of course he bought it for me, poor thing. It is funny that she should care so much, because I'm really little more than a child. Eighteen in November, and this is June third!" She had several things to tell Peele, and hurried along wondering what he would say to one of them—that she was going to join her parents in Normandy in a fortnight's time.

The letter from her mother lay in her pocket, and every now and then she touched it, her face flushing with happiness as she did so. Her mother wanted her! Had herself written to say so. "I am not very well," the beautiful woman had said; "not ill, dear, don't be alarmed, but the heat has been great, and I feel languid and good-for-nothing. When are you coming? We miss you, and I think I should feel better if you were here to bully me a little."

Peele could no longer look at her as he sometimes did, with that annoying cloud of pity in his clever eyes. Her mother wanted—needed her, and she was going home!

Peele was lying on a wicker lounge under a tree, when she came into the garden, and as she drew near she saw that he was asleep.

Sitting quietly down on the grass she studied his unconscious face. It was browner than it had been, and the cheeks were fuller. His eyes, too, had lost the bluish circles that had so troubled her. "He is almost well," *she thought* contentedly, "and will soon be able to work again. How glad he'll be!"

It was very quiet in the old garden; the warm afternoon sun brooded over the fragrant earth like a great golden bird; the trees did not stir, and their shadows looked like tangible things. Pam took off her hat and brushed back the little damp tendrils from her low brow. It was delightful to go back to her mother—to her mother who *wanted* her—but she would miss Peele who had been almost a charge to her. She had bullied him about his drops, had fussed about his food, and bought him a pair of hideous overshoes which she insisted on his wearing when it was damp, for he never wore heavy boots as most men do in the country. Her feeling, as she watched him lying in the touching helplessness of sleep, had in it something distinctly maternal. She could hardly realise that he was the same man who had made those splendid, tempestuous speeches, of which the papers had had so much to say. It was not the brilliant politician who lay sleeping in the shade by her; it was a being who was a little her child, a little her old hero, and a great deal the friend she loved.

Suddenly, perhaps disturbed by her magnetic gaze, he opened his eyes.

"Where is it?" he murmured, still half asleep; "show me the ruby if it's true!"

Then he burst out laughing and rose hurriedly. "Good girl, how are you? I *am* glad! I was just having the most abominable dream about you and that chap Burke who bought the ruby!"

"The ruby?"

"Yes. I dreamed the fellow had picked you up and was running off with you as if you had been a baby; and on one of your hands, which was hanging limply over his shoulder, shone the ruby, set in a ring. It was a brute of a dream, though it doesn't sound particularly terrifying in the telling."

"And you," she asked, looking curiously at him, "what were you doing while I was being dragged off—poor me?"

"I—that was the worst of it—I seemed to be simply looking on. Not a noble *rôle*, was it? Well, what's the news?" he went on, *laughing off his slight discomfort;* "how is your esteemed relative?"

"Cousin Susie? She is not so well to-day, nothing, you know, she has her ups and downs; but my news is that I'm off home the end of the week."

"Home! Where do you mean?"

"What could I mean but to my father and mother? My mother wants me."

"Oh, I say, Pam, this is awful! What am I to do without you?"

His injured expression amused her, but she was greatly flattered at the same time. "Oh, you are nearly well; you'll be off yourself before long."

"Yes, that's true. The Duchess has found me out, too. Luckily she thinks I have just come here from the Continent. I've got to go down to Wakeborough till the 23rd,—but that's a long way off. Must you go so soon?"

"Of course I must. It is dear of you to care, but mother needs me." She tried to keep the pride out of her voice, and failed.

"Well, I hope you will patch matters up with Lord Yeoland, for I should hate to think I'd never see you again."

"Oh, we'll meet again, no fear, Mr. Peele. Do you remember that time I said we were bound to meet again, but that we'd not like each other? Isn't it funny? I never liked any one quite as much as I do you."

"I'm very fond of you, Pam," he returned, his usually cold voice warm, "you are a dear little soul." After a minute he added, "Look here, you have queer ideas, and your circumstances are unusual. Will you promise me never to do anything mad—run away with some fellow, or anything of that sort—without telling me first? I couldn't prevent it, of course, we all dig our own graves in our own way, but I'd like you to promise. Will you?"

She held out her hand. "Yes, I will," she answered slowly, "and will you—now don't be angry, there's a dear—promise me to—to think well before you marry Lady Henrietta?"

His face stiffened and he dropped her hand. "You are absurd."

"No, I'm not. Once Madame Ravaglia told me never to forget that somewhere in the world there was—the man I am going—to love. I suppose it's the same with every one. There must be somewhere the woman you are going to love. Why don't you," she added, with a sudden change to whimsicality, "*give her a chance?*"

He burst out laughing. "How I shall miss you, you monkey! Come, let's have tea; I suppose you'll not be coming again."

CHAPTER IX

WHEN Pam came in that evening, she was met by Pilgrim, who, with a face full of indignant mystery, followed her up to her room, and closed the door.

"Now, I hope you'll believe that this is no place for you, Miss Pam! Now I hope you'll understand that a lady is a lady, and a person a person. Never in my life 'ave I been in a house——"

"Hold your tongue, Pilgrim. Give me my slippers, and tell me what the matter is without roaring at me like a hyena."

"I'm not roaring, and I'm not an 'yena. The matter is that she's been *drinking*."

Pilgrim, kneeling in front of her mistress, the slippers in her hand, looked anything but humble as she made this statement.

"Pooh, is that all? Which one? Maud?"

Pilgrim set down the slippers and folded her arms dramatically. "*Mrs. Kennedy!*"

"Mrs.—Nonsense, Pilly, you must have been drinking yourself. What on earth do you mean?"

"I mean that Mrs. Kennedy is—h'intoxicated. You may go and see for yourself!"

"But, why, it is impossible."

"You may see for yourself."

"I *will* see for myself, if you will be good enough to put on my slippers. But, of course, you are entirely mistaken."

"Which it is I've begun to pack your things, Miss Pam."

The faithful creature rose, and Pam, with a hurried pat to her hair, went downstairs.

As she opened Mrs. Kennedy's door, her heart sank. The oom certainly smelt of spirits. "May I come in?" she asked coldly. There was no lamp, but even in the dark she could see that her hostess was huddled queerly in her chair.

"Is that you?"

Susan Kennedy could hardly articulate, and as Pam advanced, some-one rose from a chair near her. It was Miss Botson.

"Oh, Pamela, she is ill!"

"So I see, Miss Botson. I am going to ring for a lamp."

"Don't let Maud come in," went on the indistinct voice. Pam shuddered.

"I have given her brandy, but it hasn't done any good." Anna Botson wrung her hands as she spoke.

"Evidently not. Maud, bring a lamp, will you?"

The girl retreated, and when she came back with the lighted lamp, Miss Botson took it, and closing the door, set it down on the table.

"Do you think she looks badly?" she whispered to Pam, who stood, very erect, staring at the dull eyes and flushed face opposite her. "There, she's dropping off to sleep again! I wanted to go, or send for Dr. Terry, but she wouldn't let me leave the room."

"Hardly necessary to send for a doctor, I should think. I—I think I will leave to-night. I have had a letter from my mother, who needs me. You will be kind enough to explain to—Mrs. Kennedy, when she is—better——"

Her disgust and anger almost choked her; she hardly knew her own voice.

Miss Botson stared. "You wouldn't go *now*, when she's ill! I know she's going to be ill."

Pam shrugged her shoulders. "She's asleep now; and please don't lie to me. It really isn't worth while."

The older woman's face flushed a dull brownish red.

"I don't know what you mean; I am not lying; what have I said? And why do you look like that?"

Her persistence exhausted Pam's small store of patience.

"I look *like that*," the girl said indignantly, "because I happen never to have seen a drunken woman before."

"Oh!" Anna Botson started back as if she had been struck.

"Aren't you ashamed? How can you say such a thing f her. She has been kind to you. Only to-day she has een making——"

Pam looked closely at the speaker.

"Perhaps," she said, at length, after a pause filled in y the loud snores of the sleeping woman, "perhaps I am istaken, and you really didn't know. If that is so I beg our pardon."

"You thought I knew—what? That she is—but she *n't!* She is ill, I tell you. Look at her!"

Turning, she pointed to the curiously dark face, the only alf-closed eyes, and Pam caught at her hand.

"Oh, you *know?* You have been with her long?"

"I came just after you left. She said she wasn't well, it she had some business to do with her lawyer. He me, and I witnessed a paper for her. Then we had tea, id she kept falling asleep. I—am afraid——"

"It's apoplexy," announced Pam shortly. "I'll send aud for a doctor."

Before the doctor came, however, Mrs. Kennedy had used herself from her heavy sleep, and slowly, with a iff tongue, asked what time it was.

"Seven; five minutes past, dear," returned Pam, in an ony of remorse for her cruel suspicion.

"Is Anna there?"

"Yes, Susie; yes, my dearest Susie."

"Glad. Very ill. Fancy, I can hardly speak. Doctor ming?"

"Yes, dear Cousin Susie. He will give you something make you better," returned Pam, stroking the great hand gently. "He will come soon and cure you."

"No. Dying. It's paral—ysis."

Anna Botson burst into tears, and kneeling put her arms out her friend.

Pam could not speak. "Don't cry, Anna," went on e sick woman laboriously, "what time is it?"

All night she asked at intervals what the time was, harp- g on the trivial detail with a persistency that almost ddened Pam, who, as well as Miss Botson, sat up with

Pam never forgot that night.

It was very warm, and through the open window came a strong scent of lilies; the lamp on the floor behind the head of the bed cast a distinct light on the gay carpet, leaving the rest of the room almost in darkness.

On the table by the bed, stood water, two medicine bottles, two spoons, and the clock. Mrs. Kennedy did not move. Flat on her back she lay motionless, the bed-clothes drawn taut over her unwieldy bulk, an ice-bag on her head.

"What time is it?" It seemed to the watchers that each time she asked the question the words came with more difficulty.

At dawn, Pam woke out of a sound sleep on the sofa to find Anna Botson shaking her gently.

"She wants you, Pamela, wake up."

The girl rubbed her eyes and stumbled to the bed, sick with sleep.

"Pamela—listen—can't talk much—listen——"

Pam leaned over, and in the faint daylight saw that the right side of the great face on the pillow was fallen and stiff. "Yes, I hear, dear Cousin Susie," she said distinctly, controlling herself with effort. "I hear quite well. Go on."

Mrs. Kennedy raised her left hand and took the girl's her own, fingering it restlessly as she spoke.

"Pamela—I'm sorry about the—di—di—vorce. I should have divorced him. Understand?"

"Yes, I know; I'll tell them, but don't you bother about that. They never cared, you know. They are happy." She hardly knew what she was saying.

"Sorry I didn't di—vorce him—sin—marriage—late now."

Pam could catch only a few words, but she nodded again. "Yes, yes, I understand. I'll tell them."

"Promise?"

"What shall I promise? Oh yes, I do. Of course, I promise."

The sick woman frowned despairingly. "Pamela—I am dying. Marry *now*. George and—her."

“Oh! You want them to marry now? Oh, I see. es, yes, Cousin Susie. Don’t talk any more; it tires ou so.”

“Promise. Marry now. Sin—my fault.”

Then the girl understood, and taking the sick woman’s and firmly in hers, made surely the most extraordinary romise made by a girl of eighteen since the world began.

“I promise, Cousin Susie dear. I promise to make ther and mother marry as soon as I get back to them.”

And Susan Kennedy, her conscience contented, fell leep.

She died the next evening, without having fully recovered nsciousness, but it seemed to Pam that she liked having r sit by the bed, and the girl never left the room until annah, the cook, led her away, murmuring something bout its being no longer any use.

Pam slept without moving until ten o’clock the morning ter, and when she went downstairs found Anna Botson, pulsive and hideous, even in her grief, filling the pink om with white and pink roses. “She always used to y that pink was her colour,” she said, as the young girl tered quietly, “and it was. You may have thought her o fat, but that was only since she was so ill. She was rfectly beautiful when she was a girl; much handsomer an some fine ladies I’ve ’eard of!”

“You mean my mother? I didn’t know you had nown Mrs. Kennedy so long.”

“Well, I have, and what’s more,” she came slowly wards the bed and looked at the two women, the dead d the living one, neither of whom had ever suspected at she was about to say—“I knew your father before e did. Did you think she, Susie, thought of having you me? She didn’t even know there was any you. It was me. I ’eard and I wanted to see you. I wanted to e you, because I love George Kennedy. That’s why. d I wrote the letter. Did you think she could have itten it?”

Pam stared at her. Was it possible that this ugly man, with her great pale mouth and her grotesque figure, d loved her father?

"Surprised, are you? Well, when you go back and tell him all about it, tell him that Anna Botson did it. 'E'll remember me."

"You say you loved him?" stammered Pam. It seemed to her that all the women in the world had loved him.

Miss Botson selected an exquisite pink rose and laid it tenderly in the cold hand on the bed.

"No. I said I *love* 'im. *I* don't chop and change. He'll tell you about it. It used to amuse him. I always looked like a—a crocodile."

After a moment she added, "She was godmother to one of the curate's daughters, and would 'ave left the money to her if I 'adn't had you come. Tell George—your father—that, please."

"But, I don't——"

Miss Botson turned, her swollen eyes glassy in the sunlight. "She's left you £10,000. Tell George, please." Then kneeling by the dead woman, she buried her face in her hands. She was praying.

CHAPTER X

"PILLY, would it be *very* dreadful if I went for a walk? It is four days since I've been out and I'm almost dead!"

Pam came into Pilgrim's room under the eaves, a forlorn little figure in a somewhat scant black skirt and jacket that she had outgrown the year before and a white shirt.

Pilgrim, busy putting a black ribbon in place of the red one on her mistress's sailor-hat, looked up.

"Oh, Pam—Miss Pam! We *were* so unjust to her! And now to go out? The funeral is to-morrow, can't you wait?"

"No one would see me; I'd go out the back door and creep away to the country—there isn't a book in the house, and I shall go *mad* if I have to sit staring at Cally any longer."

"Very well; it *is* hard for you, and 'er being no relation at all to you, when all's said and done. If you wait an hour longer it will be six o'clock and no one will see you; it's a dark day. Drop the scissors, you little brute," she added sharply to the monkey, who had seized the opportunity of making some experiments on the end of his tail with the usually jealously guarded instrument.

Pam sat down for a few minutes, and then taking her retrimmed hat, went downstairs.

"Is Miss Botson still here?" she asked the maid.

"Yes, Miss, Miss Botson is in the drawing-room."

Pam had not seen the strange woman alone since she had been told of the legacy. Anna had shown much skill in avoiding her, and on the occasions when meeting was inevitable, had managed to keep Maud or the cook in the room with them. Pam had not tried to force the meeting the other avoided, for she did not know at first what it was that she wished to say. She had pondered a great deal, however, on the story told her among the roses in the death-chamber, and at last had come to a conclusion.

Finding Miss Boston in the drawing-room, then, she closed the door, and went swiftly to the window in which the gaunt figure, in its uncouth garb of woe, was standing.

"Miss Botson," she began at once, holding out her hand, "you have not wanted me to speak to you, but I must. I go away on Monday, and this is Saturday. To-morrow—there will be no time."

"I thought you were asleep."

"Well, I'm not. Now, listen to me. I have been thinking of what you told me the other day. It was you who made me come here; you did it under false pretences, making me quarrel with my grandfather and the Duchess of Wight about it, all because you wanted to see me. You used Mrs. Kennedy as a—a means to that end. Naturally, I object to having been fooled, and it wasn't fair to *her* either."

"I know it wasn't. But there was no other way. And then there's the money—you'd never have had that if I hadn't done it."

"Yes, the money. You seem to have had a great influence over her."

Miss Botson's swollen eyes gleamed. "I did. She *loved* me. 'Anna,' she's said a thousand times, 'you are my dearest friend.' It was *me* looked after her when George went off and left 'er; it was me nursed her through the illness after her first stroke; she was in bed a whole year. It was me looked after the money matters, she was as helpless as a child in such things. And if I did make use of her, it only made her happier. She liked seeing you as much as I did. And didn't she enjoy hearing all about him every bit as much as me?"

Pam was silent. Mrs. Kennedy had indeed asked numberless questions about her husband, and listened to the answers with the interest of a child. It came back to the girl now how, always silent, her chair drawn into the shadow, the dearest friend had listened too.

"It was this way. When she came here about a year after her misfortune (an aunt left her this house) I came too, and took the lodgings where I still live. She wanted me to live in the 'ouse, but I wouldn't do that; I like my liberty too well. She was a great favourite, of course, and then every-one knew the story and wanted to see her. No one thought of *my* misfortune," she added with sudden bitterness.

"Then it didn't spoil her disposition as it did mine. Did I tell you that he laughed at me? And she wasn't really unhappy for very long. Sometimes she really enjoyed her troubles. It always gave her pleasure to tell about them, and of course every one sympathised with her."

Pam bit her lips impatiently. "Please don't go on; I don't like to hear about it."

"I've about done. I shan't bother you with my part. I lived on and never for one minute forgot the ache of thinking about him. *She* didn't know. Then I heard that he had a child, and that she was in England. That was years ago. I went down to Monks' Yeoland, third-class, and saw a young girl riding a pony. I thought she was you, but she wasn't. Ever since then I've wanted to see you again—to know you, to touch you. So when you came back this time, and I heard it, I told her, and—I'm not ashamed—made her think she wanted to see you. She did too, once I'd put the idea into her head. That's all. I'm glad I did it."

She was so unlovely in her grim sorrow that Pam felt a pang of pity for her.

"Well, I wish you had not done it, except that it may have given her some pleasure, but I'm sorry for you, Miss Boston. And you mustn't mind my not taking the money."

"Not taking the money? Not *taking*—" The woman nearly screamed in her excitement.

"No. You had no right to make her leave it to me, away from her god-child. You must see that I can't touch it!"

"Listen, Pamela, you mustn't do that! It's the only thing I've ever been able to do for him; and you must let me do it."

"It is quite impossible. Don't you see that—we—couldn't allow ourselves to be benefited by her money?

She was not so clever as you, but I'm sure she would have understood that."

"She did at first," confessed the power behind that humble throne. "I wanted her to leave it to *him*, and she said no, that he would not accept it. That was years before—before I knew you were born."

"There! You see!"

"But it's different with you. You never injured Susie."

Pam drew a long breath. "I am sorry, and—I suppose I ought to thank you for it—but I will not touch one penny of the money."

"You'll have to. *At least*, you will have to dispose of it, even if you give it all away," was the answer in a strange tone of exultation, "and, though this is all the thanks I get, I shall have benefited him, through the thanks you get! That is all I want."

She stood staring over Pam's head, her loose, pale lips hanging apart in a hideous smile of crookedly arrived at, but beautiful, sentiment.

Pam caught her hand suddenly. "Oh, I am so sorry, so dreadfully sorry," she cried, "and I shall tell him, and he will be sorry too."

Then she rushed from the room, through the kitchen, across the little garden and out into the street. It was a dark afternoon, the low clouds a metallic grey, the air heavy and hot. "I wish it would rain," the girl thought, as she struck out on the country road, her feet sending clouds of yellow dust about her. "My head feels as if it were going to burst. Poor old thing! *Poor* Miss Botson. And how repulsive she is. God should not give such women any heart at all."

She went on slowly, now that she had walked off her excitement, her hat in her hand, her head thrown back to meet the little air there seemed to be. It did not occur to her that she should not go to see Peele. No one would know, in the house of mourning in which she did not really belong, and she longed for a talk with him.

It was half-past six when she reached his house, and going in without a ring, knocked at the library door.

"It's I, Pam, may "

"Come in!"

He was lying down, a wet cloth on his forehead. "Excuse my not getting up, I've a brute of a headache. I am glad to see you—thought you had gone."

"No. Haven't you heard? Mrs. Kennedy is dead. The funeral is to-morrow; I go Monday."

"Dead! Good heavens, what killed her?"

She sat down, and leaning wearily back in her chair, gave him a brief history of the events of the week.

"But—you poor little thing, how dreadful for you. I'm so sorry."

"It has been pretty bad. I was so dreadfully sorry for her. "At first"—she hesitated—"I thought she had been drinking. It makes me so ashamed! And then poor Miss Botson, whom I can't bear—I mean, I *couldn't*—is so pathetic."

"The woman with the teeth?"

"Yes. And Cally—my monkey, you know—did such a fearful thing. The cook was sitting in the room one day, yesterday, and suddenly Mrs. Kennedy's hand moved. Came right up in the air. Hannah screamed, and Pilgrim came rushing in, and there, if you please, was Caliban in the coffin, curled up under her poor dead arm. It seemed so—*disrespectful*."

"Very. Monkeys are not distinguished for great deference, are they? Poor old Pam!"

He looked pale, she saw, and frowned with pain as he spoke. "One of your very worst headaches, isn't it?"

"Yes. You see, you weren't here to take care of me, and I got into mischief. Took a long walk this morning, and then after luncheon I over-tired myself looking out a lot of old arms in the garret. I'm going to have some of them cleaned and got into shape; a few of them are very good."

"Oh, over there on the table. May I look?"

She crossed the room and stood for a few minutes turning over the quaint old swords and rapiers with cautious hands. "This inlaid one is beautiful, and oh, how sharp!"

"Yes, it's Venetian. Be careful. Isn't the sheath there?"

She came back to her chair, the long slim rapier in her hand. "I'm going to take fencing lessons some day," she observed carelessly, making a few neat strokes as she spoke. "I am not bad at it, my wrist is flexible; look at that!"

"Good! Don't run me through, though. Hello—thunder!"

"Yes, there is going to be a storm, ate!"

Laying the rapier on the chimney-piece she ran to the window. "The sky is as black as pitch—oh!"

A vivid flash of lightning followed by a loud clap of thunder sent her back to her chair.

"I'm glad it's going to rain, but—I hope it won't be a *very* bad storm."

"Not afraid, are you?"

"Yes, I am. I can't help it—oh!" Another zig-zag of angry brilliance cut across the sky, followed by such a crash of unearthly noise that the girl gave a little cry and hid her face in her hands.

"Don't be a goose, dear; think how cool it will be for you to walk home!"

"I—oh, Mr. Peele, I—I wish it was over."

But it was not. It was, indeed, to be one of those destructive storms which come only once in several years. No rain fell as yet, and the darkening room was lit at close intervals by terrifying lightning flashes, and shaken by deafening thunder.

Pam sat, looking, in her agony of fear, very monkey-like, huddled in her chair, her hands gripping its arms.

"The rain must come soon, poor child—ah!"

The flashy lightning that interrupted him was almost on the instant followed by a crashing noise that actually shook the house.

"Struck!"

As he spoke, Pam rushed to him and in a paroxysm of terror threw herself into his arms.

"It struck the big beech, dear—we are safe," he murmured, stroking her shoulder, and full of pity for her.

"Hark! there's the rain."

Without speaking, she continued to cling to him, trembling from head to foot. "Poor little girl, dear old Pam," he murmured soothingly.

"Well, by God!"

Pam sprang aside at the sound of the new voice, and turning saw Charnley Burke standing in the doorway.

"Mr. Burke!"

"I—who is this gentleman? Ah! Mr. Peele!"

The big man's face was purple with fury, his eyes bulging and bloodshot.

Peele rose. "Yes. I am the owner of this house. Perhaps you may owe me some explanation," he said quietly.

"You are right. I came to Torpington, with her permission, to see Miss Yeoland. Her maid telling me she had gone for a walk, I followed. I saw her come in here, and waited, for her to come out. Then—the storm. I thought her hostess might give me shelter. Where," he added, when he had with a great effort finished his story, "where is her hostess?"

Pam had left Peele and stood by her own chair, her hands on its back.

"Mr. Peele is my host. There is no hostess here," she said quietly. "Who let you in?"

"Yes! I should have been announced, eh?"

"Hold your tongue!" Peele came a step forward. "You have found your way into my house; be kind enough to keep a civil tongue in your head so long as you are in it."

"I shall not be in it long, Mr. Peele. I sail for Australia to-morrow. I came to—to say good-bye to—to a girl I—honoured—and I find her here. You are young, my dear, to have so early shown your blood." Then he went on, turning again to Peele, "Don't try to fight me, or I'll break your back."

"I cannot fight you any more than I could fight a mad bull. But I can run *this* into you," seizing the rapier, "and if you do not at once leave my house, by God, I *will*."

Pam held up her hand as he finished. "Mr. Peele, listen—don't hurt him—I'll make him go. And now, Mr. Burke, you listen to me. Mr. Peele is the best friend I have in the world. I love him. Oh, not in the way you mean, but I love him. And if, by chance, I did love him in the way you mean, and he me, I should be here in the way you mean, too. And you would have to say about it—exactly nothing. I am my own mistress, and I shall always do what I like. What I now like is to say good-bye to you, and to add that I think you a very ridiculous person, and that I shall never willingly speak another word to you."

Her cool, clear voice, each word enunciated with the greatest distinctness, seemed to fall on the heated mental atmosphere as the rain had fallen on the storm-torn world a few minutes before.

The colour ebbed out of Burke's face; Peele rested the point of the rapier on the floor, and a short silence fell.

"Very well, I will go. I believe you—that you are straight *up to this*. You know why I came; I shall never trouble you again. I am a rough man—a wild bull, perhaps—but my wife must be different. Good-bye."

Without a word to Peele, he turned and left the house.

After a moment, Pam said quietly, "I suppose I really shouldn't have come, should I?"

"You know as well as I, that it was as innocent as—going to church. Damn it, it insults you even to say that I never had a thought—" he broke off savagely.

"Oh, I know. Of course you hadn't. But, do you think," hesitating, she took up her hat and pinned it on—"You remember what Ravaglia told me?"

"Yes." Well, do you think that *he*, when he comes, will mind? She said he'll want 'not only my future, but my past as well.' Will *he* be angry with me for coming?"

"No," cried Peele vehemently. "You tell him about it, and he won't be angry with you. I should have known better, but heaven knows——"

"The rain has stopped; I must go. I'll go across the fields, so I shan't meet Mr. Burke."

"Yes. Pam, I can't tell you how sorry I am."

"You needn't be. It's all right. I don't care a button what Charnley Burke said. And, it has been well worth it. I've loved every minute I've been with you."

"So have I. Write me sometimes, will you?"

"Yes. And you—*don't* over work. Remember, you are not strong yet."

He took her hands in his. "God bless you, dear. And when *he* comes, I shall tell him that I think him the happiest man in the world."

Then she left, disregarding the tempest of rain, and going to an upstairs window he stood and watched her speeding over the fields towards the murky town.

PART V

CHAPTER I

"'DEARLY beloved, we are gathered together in the sight of God, and in the face of this company, to join together this man and this woman.'"

The Reverend Edmund Lee had a very beautiful voice, and his Oxford education had modified the soft slurring of his Virginian accent into something unusually attractive.

He was a tall, thin man, with a delicate face above which a mass of rather long, childishly silky hair lay like an untidy halo.

Behind him, through the open window, a soft sea-breeze blew in, fluttering his surplice, and drawing little gusts of sweetness from the flowers with which the charming, shabby room was filled.

"'——why they may not be lawfully joined together, let him now speak, or else,'" dramatically, "'hereafter for ever hold his peace.'"

There was no reason. No other man; no other woman; no hereditary insanity; no hideous disparity of years. There was no impediment.

"'Guy, wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife?'"

"I will."

Sacheverel answered distinctly, his brown face held bravely to the afternoon sun. His hair had thinned at the temples, his waistcoat was fuller than of old, but he was, more than one of the onlookers thought, rather splendid at that moment.

"'Pauline Mary, wilt thou have this man to be thy wedded husband?'"

The young chaplain, with his thin face, like that of some saint in an old picture, was moved by the scene, and his mellow voice laid a wonderful emphasis on the words "and forsaking all others, keep thee only unto him, so long as ye both shall live."

And the woman who had indeed "forsaken all others and kept her only unto him," for twenty years, answered, her hollow eyes filled with tears, "I will."

The beautiful service went on, the little congregation listening closely; an over-ripe rose shed its leaves softly over a polished table; a bird sang a few sudden notes in the darkness of the ilex-grove outside; a small lizard flashed past one of the windows; some one at the back of the room gave a muffled sob.

"'Those whom God has joined together, let no man put asunder.'"

Guy Sacheverel and Pauline Yeoland were man and wife.

As the chaplain laid down his book, Pam came forward quietly, and kissed her mother. "Come, dearest, you must sit down and rest now, and have a glass of wine," she said, seating her in a great chair against whose dark leather back her delicate blonde beauty stood out in striking relief. "are you *very* tired?"

"No, dear,—I am so much stronger now. Ah, Pilgrim, my good old Jane!"—Pilgrim, in a new silk gown and a much curled front, a vanity to which encroaching baldness had of late constrained her, kissed the hand of the woman she had served so faithfully, her eyes wet and swollen with tears.

"Thank God, Mrs. Sacheverel," she said, her voice husky.

"Go 'way, Pilly, you tearful old goose," commanded Pam sternly, "I won't have you upsetting her. Look, mother dear,—the Happy Bridegroom!"

Sacheverel swung across the room with the jaunty grace he had never lost, and sat down by his wife. "Well, Pam, you little match-maker,—are you satisfied at last?" he asked, his eyes rather grave, though he smiled.

"I am. And did you ever see mother look so lovely?"

"Never," he returned with conviction, "Ah, Pauline,"——

Pam watched their faces as he took her mother's shadowy hand in his, and they gazed at each other for a moment in silence, and the young clergyman watched her.

Her face wore a curious expression, half-tender, half-amused, which puzzled him. Then suddenly she smiled gaily, as the servant, the youthful Antonio of the old days, grown several pounds heavier with the years, and resplendent in a new livery, approached with a small glass of wine on a large silver salver.

"Ah Signora," the man exclaimed, beaming with true Italian sympathy at the strange little scene, "who would have thought, six months ago, that we should ever see this day! *Dio, quanto abbiamo pregato alla Santissima.*"

"I am sure that your prayers helped my recovery, Antonio," answered his mistress gently. "Don't let Marrietta work too hard, and don't forget, I am to be godmother."

Mr. Lee watched curiously. It was an extraordinary household, and had, from his first knowledge of it, a week before, when Sackeverel had come and asked him to perform the marriage ceremony, interested him keenly. Thoroughly convinced that the man and woman whom he had in the presence of their daughter just made one, had committed one of the worst sins mentioned in the decalogue, the sight of them, evidently perfectly happy and quite unashamed, gave the young man a feeling of unreality. He half expected to see them all melt away mistily, as people do in dreams.

Pam, slim and graceful in her yellow *crêpe* gown, was to him that most alluring thing in the world to a young man; a lovely woman whose character is a mystery. It would have been more comprehensible to him if Pam had shown some slight sign of embarrassment at this strange gathering. The man was wise enough to realise that being thoroughly accustomed to any circumstance robs it of the greater part of its awkwardness, but it seemed to him strange that even with himself, in his sacredotal quality, the girl seemed quite at ease. He knew that her father and mother had lived for years in an unhallowed way, and she knew that he knew it, yet, as the party went into the dining-room for the little wedding-feast, she chatted to him as easily as if her own existence were not a most eloquent witness to that sin.

She was full of a half-maternal care for the bride, too, that had its absurd side. "You won't let her get too tired, father, will you?" she insisted. "Remember how long she was ill, and how *dreadfully!*"

"No danger of my forgetting that, my dear. Every time I look at her"—Sacheverel broke off— ; she had been so ill ever since October, with the horrible, dragging typhoid, that even now, in April, he could not bear to think of it.

Mr. Lee looked first at the mother, then at the daughter. Mrs. Sacheverel was much the more beautiful, and her short hair, curling in baby-like rings all over her head made her look, in the shaded light, almost younger than her daughter.

Pam had stopped growing, and her slim, vigorous young figure had lost its angles. Mr. Lee particularly admired the gleaming net-work of glossy chestnut hair which almost covered her head, and the brilliance of which made her small face look, at first sight, paler than it really was.

"You will be lonely, Pam," remarked her father suddenly, "don't put off your going for too long."

"I shan't be lonely. I never was in my life! And the wedding isn't until the 30th, so I can have a rest before undertaking *that.*"

"Are you going to be married, Miss Yeoland?" asked Mr. Lee, with a little pang, for he was only twenty-seven, and in spite of the armour of his clerical garments, peculiarly susceptible.

Pam laughed gaily, "Not I! One of my cousins is to be, and I am going to help with the preparations."

Then she turned again to her mother, watching her with the anxiety she had not yet got over, for the convalescence had been painfully long. Now at last, however, her mother was well. The girl remembered her arrival at Houlgate; her mother's weakness and languor, her father's growing anxiety. She had told the story of poor Mrs. Kennedy, but it met with an indifference which seemed to Pam, in spite of all her philosophy, a little cruel: while to the history of Anna Botson related, through some unanalysed instinct, to her father alone, he made the astounding reply that he couldn't place the woman at all.

"I can't have laughed at her, you know," he insisted gently, wagging his head in mild amusement, "for I can't even remember her! Ugly? They were all ugly, my dear, in that dreadful town, except—Susy."

To-day, sitting at her father's wedding-feast, the thought of that other one returned to her mind again and again.

Her keen imagination pictured poor, pretty Susie on his other side; she half expected him to turn from her mother and smile down tenderly at her, as he must have done, on that other day,—her young, handsome father, who was in love with the little ordinary thing!

"Don't frown that way, Pam, you look too like Cally," remarked Sacheverel at this point, and the girl started. "Oh, my poor old boy, I forgot to let him out; he is still locked in my room." Rising, she left the room with the singularly graceful gait she had inherited from her father.

"Who is Cally?" inquired Mr. Lee.

"Her monkey, a most unattractive old beast whom she has had for years, and tenderly loves."

"I should imagine that Miss Yeoland is constant," returned the Virginian with a certain air that highly amused his host.

It was plainly to be seen that the good-looking parson was falling in love with the girl. She was going, the father told himself with anticipatory amusement, to play the deuce with men.

"Mother dear," Pam had returned, "the carriage is at the door and Claire has brought everything down; you have not too much time."

"Let me finish my ice, Pam."

"I can't let you miss the train, can I? Father, it really is time."

"Good," he replied gaily, laughing as he rose, "have you got the old shoe ready?"

Pam nodded, the monkey close in her arms. She was not merry.

A moment later, she stood in the door, under the little "marquise," watching her father as he and the maid arranged her mother's pillows in the carriage.

Sacheverel offered the clergyman a seat down to the town, but he refused, and after bowing mutely to every one in turn, started on his way through the olives.

Pilgrim, the cook, Antonio, and Pam, were the only ones left.

"Good-bye, Pam."

"Good-bye, mother."

"Good-bye, little girl." The old carriage was off, creaking over the gravel.

"'Buon viaggio, signori! Buonissimo viaggio!'"

Bang! The slipper struck the coachman's broad back, and fell into the carriage. "'Addio, Signori,—buonissimo viaggio!'"

The little group of servants withdrew slowly into the coolness of the house, leaving Pam and Caliban alone in the sun.

It was over, then! She had kept her promise to that poor dying woman, and they were married. And now, what should she do? During the long months of her mother's illness the girl had grown to know her father in a new way, while constant nursing had to a certain extent drawn her closer to her mother.

Half unconsciously, she had hoped that the new companionship would last, but it had not lasted. With every hour of Pauline's recovery Pam had grown less necessary to both her and Sacheverel; they were kind to the girl, but they did not need her.

And now, even they were gone, and she was alone.

"*Ebbene!* Pam Yeoland," she apostrophised herself in angry disdain of the feeling that was hurting her throat, "are you going to howl? You certainly ought to be used to being alone, by this time!"

Walking slowly round the house, she sat down on the stone bench near which she had crouched in the darkness that evening years ago, when Christopher Cazalet had expounded to Pilgrim his plan for taking the child to England.

It was a perfect afternoon, as warm as one in a northern June, although it was not yet the middle of April.

The sea, stretched in bland beauty before her, was no bluer than the sky, and the brilliant colouring of the whole scene was cunningly softened by the masses of silver-grey olives that covered the slope.

"Cally dear," Pam said, at last absently, "I trust you are fond of nature, for it's all you're likely to have for several days! Just look at that sea, and tell me if in your wildest pipe-dream you ever saw anything lovelier? And it is so warm, too. I wonder," she added with the sudden briskness of the unoccupied to whom a delightful inspiration has come, "why I can't go for a swim!"

A few minutes later, a big bundle under one arm, the monkey perched on the other shoulder, and regardless of the fact that a yellow *crêpe* gown is not the best garment in the world in which to rush down a rough, dusty path, she was flying through the trees, laughing and talking nonsense to the little beast who alone, of all the living creatures in the world, belonged to her. Caliban, squatting at the edge of the water, watched with grave interest while his mistress splashed about in the sun-warmed water. It was the first swim of the season, and Pam had been unable to find her oil-skin cap. At first she swam carefully, holding her crown of braids cautiously above the waves, but at last she could no longer resist the joy of diving from the little platform, so that when Caliban had waited impatiently at the door of the cabin, for what seemed to him, judging by his chattering protests, an unnecessarily long time, she emerged once more clothed, but with a towel around her neck, and her splendid hair, still wet and gleaming, hanging nearly to her feet.

"Shame on you; an old monkey like you, using such language!"

Sitting down in the warm sand, with her usual magnificent disregard of clothes, the girl set to work to dry her hair, amusing herself at the same time with the monkey.

It was delightfully warm, and the swim had done her good; what she had considered her idiotic blues, had flown; she was eighteen, and the world lay before her.

"Caliban Sacheverel," she said at length, with much solemnity, rising and shaking back her fresh-combed hair, "never let yourself get into the way of thinking that you are *necessary* to your mother and father for you aren't. They can be fond of you, in a way, and they are very good to you, but they don't need you, any more than they need me. Now come along, the sun will set in a minute, and the sky will be glorious from the terrace."

Taking the little creature in her arms, she ran up the path, almost as easily as she had run down. At the top, she turned, and looked back.

The sun had dipped into the sea, and the sky was a mass of snowy and rosy clouds flecked and streaked with gold; over the purpling water stretched a track of burnished scales, and yonder, pale in the glow, the moon was rising.

Pam drew a deep breath of acute joy, and turning, found herself face to face with James Peele.

"You!" he cried, staring at her in complete surprise. "What are you doing here?"

"What are *you* doing here? This is Villa Arcadie!"

CHAPTER II

"IT is really you, Pam? And this is Arcadia?"

"Yes."

"You told me, do you remember?—that I could never come to Arcadia."

"And you have found your way in spite of me!"

"No. I—was led. I was taking a walk, and some fairy led me here."

"In other words, you tried to take a short cut down from the top of the hill, and strayed in here."

"Yes. I have strayed into—Arcadia."

They stood looking at each other, their eyes, as they glibly talked nonsense, full of the evening light.

"Yes," Peele repeated, "I have certainly strayed into Arcadia. And you, little Pam of a year ago, are you glad to see me?"

"I should not be," she returned, ignoring his outstretched hand, "I ought to snub you, pretend to have forgotten you, for you forgot me, you never answered my letters; but—I *am* glad, Mr. Peele."

Taking her hand, he bent and kissed it with an easy grace that was a little unexpected in one of his bearing.

"Forgive all that; I was busy and troubled, and now, we are in Arcadia."

"Yes. Come, let's sit down on that bench." Leading the way, she sat down, swinging her now nearly dry hair back with an impatient gesture.

"I have been swimming and had no cap," she explained carelessly, "now tell me what you are doing in this part of the world."

He watched her, forgetting the sunset, his soft hat crumpled in his hands as he clasped them about his knee.

"There is a town, a place called Athens," she began slowly, "ruled over by a worthy prince named Theseus, and peopled with vague personalities;—it lies down there, at the edge of the sea.

"Hither, oh maiden, have I come, on serious matters bent. Then, this evening—no, I do not believe that it was mere chance. I believe that Puck turned my alien footsteps this way! And here is Caliban, too. Caliban, my ancient friend, how are you? Pam, I can hardly believe that it is really you!"

"Nor I." They were both silent for a few minutes, their thoughts back in the old days, in the old English house and garden.

"And so this is your home! This is the place you used to tell me about," he went on.

"Yes. There are the olives, you remember? It is so strange that you should happen to come *to-night*. I am all alone; my father and mother have just gone away; they were married this afternoon."

"Ah!" It seemed to him quite in keeping with all the rest, that she should be announcing the marriage of her parents.

"You have always been alone, Pam, when I have known you; you were never a permanent person in a permanent setting. You had either just come, or were just going."

The curious old look of tragedy came to her eyes as he spoke, but as he finished, she smiled.

"Do you remember calling me a privateer?"

"Yes."

"That is what you mean. But am I not rather a cheery ittle pleasure yacht that is under no orders, and can land t any port?"

"Please don't be a boat of any kind. You are just Pam, if you are not a fairy. Look, there goes my worthy Puck, swinging his lantern!"

It was an early fire-fly flitting over the grass. The ght in the sky was fading now, and as the roseate glow aled, the moon gathered gold, and shadows crept over the orld.

"We will have supper there at the end of the terrace," The speech came off, winning instant attention, and i its success, stamping him unmistakably as a man wh must devote his talents to that particular branch of tha particular subject.

"I had found my '*clou*,'" he told Pam, simply.

"Father told me that you had become a 'South African,'" she returned, "but I wouldn't read about it."

"Pam! How you must have cared!"

There was no coxcombry in his speech, and she knew it as well as he.

"I did care," she returned, with the same frankness, "and—then?"

"Then I went out to see—a man in Natal. It went off well, I got back in November."

"Did they send you?"

"No. I—I was not well, and the doctors advised a sea-voyage, so I went there."

"To rest yourself with political work! Oh, what an awful person you are. How I used to have to scold you!"

"Yes. The next time I go to South Africa," he added, staring thoughtfully into his empty wine-glass, "I am going as an envoy from my government. And some day,—I shall be Colonial Secretary."

"Going to poison Mr. Chamberlain?"

"He will be out, before long, and I am only thirty-six."

He looked several years older than his age, she observed. He had grown very grey, and the lines about his eyes and mouth were deep. It seemed to her, too, that when he poke of his ambition the mask of cold resolution that ettled down on his face, set her as far from him as she ad been the evening when she first saw him.

The man who had talked of Arcadia had gone; this an was old, and cold, and hard, and she but a child to im.

"*Brrr!*" she exclaimed, with the little shiver he rememered so well, "Enough of politics! I am glad of your ccess, but—please come down again to my level. My ountry lies in the lowlands; I cannot breathe your lympian air!"

"Your land—this Arcadia—lies close under dear," he answered gently, "or better still, close under the moon. Hark!"

In the ilex-grove a nightingale burst out singing, and the man and the girl, starting up from their neglected supper, stood close together, listening to it.

"'Ut ego in Arcadia—sum,'"; said Peele, as the last note died away. 'Take me down under the olives. How beautiful their delicate shadows are, on the coarse grass.' They went down the mossy steps and leaving the garden passed into the olive-grove.

"And you said I could not come—here!"

"You have told me that before, Mr. Peele."

"Then admit that you were wrong."

"No, for I did not mean this, as you know."

"In all the world there is but one Arcadia, Pam, and this is it, and you and I are alone in it."

"*Alone in it!*"

"Yes. You and I and the yellow moon, and the little dark bird with the golden throat; just us four."

"Except Pilgrim, and Antonio, and the cook!"

"Cook me no cook. Just you and I. Pam, it is good to be together?"

"Yes."

They had reached a bench, built round the most gnarled and ancient olive in the grove, and as she answered him, the young girl sat down.

"And you forgive me for not having written?"

"Oh yes; it doesn't matter now."

"No, nothing matters now, at this moment—but the moonlight on your hair. Tell me all about yourself—except that you have grown to be an adorable woman."

"There is little to tell. I have been with father and mother all the time."

"And now they have married and left you!"

"Yes. It is so strange to think of mother as 'Mrs. Sacheverel,' after all these years!"

"You must be glad."

"Oh; *me!* I didn't care."

"But *they* must have been glad." She shook her head.

"No, I don't think they cared, one way or the other. They did it to please me."

"To please you!"

"Yes. I promised poor Mrs. Kennedy, you know."

"But you, the opposer of matrimony, the apostle of freedom! That was a strange whirl of fortune's wheel, little Pam"

She did not answer as he sat down by her, and after a pause, he went on, "Do you remember how we used to talk about your 'him'?"

"Yes."

"And how when he came you were going to love him for ever and ever?"

"Yes."

"Has he come?"

"No," she answered, with an obvious sincerity that gave him a pang.

"But when he does come, you and he will live in Arcadia—I mean in the Arcadia of the mind and the heart—for ever?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "How can I tell, Mr. Peele? So many things might happen; he might die, or he might not care for me."

Peele drew a deep breath, and rose, looking at his watch. He was irritated with himself for having been weak and inconsiderate enough to question her so closely, and yet he was almost angry with her for her utter unconsciousness.

They had fallen in love with each other, but only he, who had not the slightest intention of allowing his life to be changed by a sentiment, knew what had happened, and when he had once left her, he would, he told himself, have the decency to be glad that she had not understood.

"I must be off Pam," he said, a little stiffly.

"Yes, it is late. You will come to-morrow."

"No. I cannot come again; I must be getting back to my work."

She looked up at him inquiringly. "But you will come to say good-bye, and—I, too, go to England in a fortnight. Evelyn, my cousin, is to be married."

"No, I shall not see you again." His voice was harsh, and the faint colour faded from her cheeks, as he spoke.

"But why?" she asked piteously, like a child, who does not understand why it is punished.

"Can't you guess why?" he answered, catching her wrists and looking into her eyes. "You didn't use to be stupid!"

Suddenly her white face was flooded with a deep rose-colour, and she gave a short laugh. "Is it *that*?"

"Yes, it is that!"

"And I never guessed."

That was all. Catching her in his arms he kissed her mouth once, and then, a moment later, found himself walking rapidly down the hill.

CHAPTER III

"MISS YEOLAND has arrived, your Grace, and she wishes me to ask your Grace if she may bring her—her—her monkey up with her. It seems that the monkey hid in the carriage, and Miss Yeoland discovered it only a moment ago."

The Duchess turned from her glass, one cheek blushing sweetly with "Rose de Jeunesse," the other as yellow as Nature, abetted by Time, had made it. "Very well, Henderson. Ask Miss Yeoland to go into the drawing-room, and tell her I shall be delighted to see the monkey. Has Lady Henrietta gone in yet?"

"No, your Grace, I believe not, your Grace."

The Major-domo marched solemnly downstairs into the great hall of the hotel, confident that his splendid red silk legs showed to great advantage against the light carpet, and past his humble *confrère*, the concierge, to the carriage in which Pam still sat.

"Oh, very well, thank you. No, don't trouble to take him, he sometimes bites," the girl returned, when he had given his message and opened the door of her shabby vehicle.

The little brute in her arms, her scarlet cloak with its too-warm fur collar caught about her with one hand, she swept into the hotel, her long white skirts dragging disregarded.

"This way, miss, if you please; the lift is not working to-night." As she followed the servant upstairs and along the corridor, Pam's heart beat loudly against Caliban, but that unsympathetic simian chattered with delight at having got his own way, and took no heed. The girl had not seen Peele since the night before the last—the night of the wedding.

All the day before she had waited for him, and he had not come, but the afternoon's post brought her a note from the Duchess, asking her, without a word of explanation, to come and dine with her the following evening, and that evening was now here, and in a moment they would meet, he and she.

She shivered slightly as the servant opened the door of the salon, and she passed in.

Peele stood by the fire. "Ah, Miss Yeoland, how do you do? The Duchess and Lady Henrietta are late, as usual."

They shook hands and then the Major-domo, taking off her cloak, stood waiting. "Give him your scarf," suggested Peele, quietly adding, as she obeyed with a quick blush, "Hello, my ancient and honourable Caliban, this is an unexpected pleasure!"

"He hid in the cab," explained the girl, angry and surprised at her own confusion; "he—he is very lonely."

As the door closed, Peele said quickly, his face changing, "Pam, how is Arcadia?"

He did not move a step toward her as she stood, the monkey in her arms a curious addition to the picture she made, under a great red lamp. "How is Arcadia?"

"I don't know. I have not been there since."

"Is that true?"

"True. I have been in a place without sunlight, without a moon, without blue in the sky or sheep on the sea. There was no bird singing in the trees, no flowers."

He watched her with a look of dreamy delight in his grave face, and then, at the last words, he frowned, and drawing himself up stiffly, said, as though continuing a subject on which he had been speaking—"really delighted to see you again. Ah!"

The Lady Henrietta came hurrying in, tugging at her gloves and out of breath. "My dear Pam, I *do* beg your pardon. Agnes was so idiotic to-night, everything went wrong. My dear child, how pretty you have grown!" Kissing the young girl she looked at her with the frank admiration which is one of the pleasant prerogatives of great beauty.

"Isn't she charming, Jim?"

"Very," responded Peele promptly. "How old are you, Miss Pam?"

"Eighteen and a half." The young girl's heart sunk painfully as the Lady Henrietta's kind kiss rested on her cheek. In Arcadia, thoughts of honour and of ownership had not occurred to her, but now she realised with a pang that she had no right to Peele. To add to her pain, she noticed that the Lady Henrietta's face had grown thinner, and lost much of its former characteristic repose. There were worried lines about her mouth, and her eyes had grown a little hollow. Not the least unpleasant thought resulting from these observations was that the lines in the beautiful face that smiled on her so kindly, were drawn by Peele's hand. "He is not good to her," the girl thought indignantly, with an angry flash of her eyes at the surprised man by the fire. Until that moment, engrossed with the sublime selfishness of a first love, the girl had not given a thought to the woman her lover had promised to marry. There had been in her mind, as in her heart, room but for that man and for herself.

Now, reluctantly, her mind opened, and took in the third person whom her heart could never admit.

"She has a right, I have none," the girl told herself with dreary justice. "I have none."

Her face paled as she watched her hostess's daughter, who was now talking to the man who stood between them.

"And they say," the Lady Henrietta was saying to Peele, when the girl again caught the thread of the discourse, "that there will be lots of exquisite rugs and things—some china, too—put up at the sale. We must go, Jim! One can never have too many really good rugs."

Peele walked to the balcony and stood looking out. "I loathe auctions," he said impatiently, "and I shan't be able to loiter in Paris anyway."

"It's the great sale, you know, Pam," his *fiancée* went on with a little shrug. "Ravaglia's things."

"*Ravaglia!* Is she having a sale? But *why?*"

"I'm sure I don't know, but she is. The 1st, 2nd, and 3rd of May."

Pam clasped her hands tightly. "But, do tell me; she is surely not poor, or ill?"

"Why? You can't know her, child! Why are you so interested?"

"But I do know her—I *used* to, that is. And I was very fond of her. Please tell me, Lady Henrietta."

Peele turned, drawing a gardenia from one of the vases through his buttonhole. "I believe it is because she has lost her health," he said. "I saw her driving in the Bois a month ago, and hardly recognised her. Poor thing, it is a pity, for she is the best actress in the world, without a doubt."

As he finished speaking, the Duchess came in, knocking over a small table with her train, and filling the room with scent.

"Sorry to be so late, but then I always *am* late. Well, you bad little thing"—to Pam—"how are you? Aren't you ashamed of leaving me in the lurch like that?"

Pam stared. "Oh, you mean about going to Ireland?" she asked, as the ducal kiss grazed her ear. "I didn't throw you over," she added, with the logic which had so amused Peele at Torpington, "for I never said I'd go! I was sorry, but I couldn't help it."

"You are a wretch! I was furious! However—you have grown; quite grown up, I declare! I hope you're still amusin'? Jim, will you ring, please, these are the *most* unpunctual people."

"They don't do so badly, mamma, considering that you are always late," suggested her daughter gently.

"That reminds me of the man who said his brother-in-law had been drunk for some years. How's your grandfather?"

Pam laughed. "He is well; I'm going to Monks' Yeoland next week."

"Are you indeed! Well, just tell your grandfather that he's an abominable old creature, never to write to one—will you?"

As they sat down to their rather cold soup, her Grace rattled on. "And mind, whatever you do, don't marry your fat cousin."

"Do you know Ratty?"

The Duchess chuckled. "I do. I was at Monks' Yeoland in August, and Ratty and I had a tremendous flirtation. He told me—all he knew," she added significantly.

"Did he indeed?" Pam did not smile. She resented jocular impertinence.

Caliban, who possessed the social virtue of abhorring a silence, and who, old as he was, appeared to feel it his duty to amuse his hostess, here created a diversion by stealing her Grace's bread, and retiring with it to a distant corner, where he tore it to bits with hungry sounds, but instead of eating it, stuffed it slily into a vase.

"Charming, your monkey, really a dear. And fancy my finding out quite by chance that—you lived near here," went on the Duchess, turning again to Pam. "I saw a package of books at the library addressed to you, and asked the man about it. What a small world it is!"

"Very." Then Peele was not responsible for her invitation!

"And then I heard that you were alone, and wrote to you. Delighted to see you again, my dear. And you have grown to be very pretty too, hasn't she, Henny?"

"Charming, mamma."

"Nothing like youthful freshness, is there, Henny?"

"Nothing, mamma."

Pam hated the Duchess at that moment.

Peele talked little. He had not meant to see Pam again, but in the hurry of a busy day, he had not learnt of her invitation to dinner until an hour before her arrival.

It would have been infinitely better if he had been able to slip quietly away, but the matter had been taken out of his hands, and though against his will, his heart beat strong with happiness as he watched her. The man, at thirty-six, was in love for the first time.

As to the girl herself, she could not think. It was, as she watched the Lady Henrietta's careworn face, incredible to her that for forty-eight hours she had forgotten the very fact of her existence, yet so it had been.

And now she could not think; she was obliged to talk and to listen to the words of the others, but she knew that later, when she was alone, she would have to clear the maze of thought that whirled vaguely through her brain. "I must decide, when I am at home, what I must do," she told herself over and over.

"Sir Albert Miller told you, didn't he, Jim?"

Pam started. That Sir Albert Miller was the greatest authority in England on South African matters, even she knew. "Yes," returned Peele carelessly.

"Aren't they going to send him—Sir Albert Miller—out on a special commission?" Pam asked. "Isn't he the man?"

Peele's face stiffened into a cold frown.

"I believe there is some talk about it."

"Of course there is, Pam! He is so close-mouthed, he never will tell us anything," added Lady Henrietta flushing. "And he, Miller, has been here, and that is why Jim came—quite as much as to see me!"

"And if they do send him out,—" Peele went on slowly.

"Yes, if they do, what then, Jim?"

"I was going to say that they would certainly have sent Dabney with him, if——"

"If Dabney were not dead!" All the lines in his *fiancée's* face were suddenly accentuated as she spoke, and Pam's heart gave a great throb.

"And as he is dead," put in the Duchess, throwing a grape to Caliban, who was sitting up on a chair like a gentleman, "whom will they send?"

"My dear Duchess! If I should tell, even to you, what Sir Albert Miller has said to me, it would be more than a crime, it would be a political fault!"

"Oh, very well. Be mysterious by all means, my dear boy, if it amuses you. As to your famous Sir Albert, he may be very clever, and all that, but his wife likes *cats*, which I must say I don't understand, do you, Pam? Persian cats, nasty creatures who swallow their own fur and have horrid indigestions—as might be expected." Her Grace babbled on, covering her daughter's nervous silence as well as if her method had been more dignified, and a few minutes later they went into the sitting-room for coffee.

Pam leaned back in her chair and watched her hostess feed Caliban with bits of coffee-soaked sugar, with a curious feeling that she had taken an opiate, the effects of which were just beginning to wear off.

The Lady Henrietta, on Peele's request, was playing one of Sinding's wonderful compositions, and Peele, opposite Pam, sat listening with folded arms and closed eyes.

When the Duchess had dropped asleep, Caliban, uncomfortable but polite, on her slippery lap, Peele opened his eyes and looked at Pam.

He had not meant to see her again, but the gods had foiled his intention, and his gaze now was an embrace.

To his surprise, however, she rose and went to the piano. "What is that lovely thing?" she asked gently.

"It is by a Norwegian; do you like it? Oh, Jim, you are really *too* rude! I believe you are asleep as well as mamma."

Peele laughed. "Not I! I was listening."

The Lady Henrietta laid her beautiful bare arm over the young girl's shoulders. "Let us go out into the balcony, dear," she said. "There's a man who comes every night and sings in the street; he'll be coming soon. A good voice, you know, though of course untrained."

They sat down in the tiny enclosure, and Pam, who had followed them, leaned against the stone balustrade. "May I smoke, Henrietta? Glorious evening," he went on, taking a flat gold box from his pocket, and selecting a cigarette from it; "look at the moon. A real Arcadian night!"

Pam did not move. She was not looking at him.

"Arcadia?" repeated the elder woman thoughtfully. "Yes, there must always have been a moon there."

"Except in the daytime," laughed Pam, "and personally I think I like stars better than the moon."

"Do you? Do you know, Pam, I've never seen the sun rise, and perhaps for that very reason, I always have had a feeling that while it lasts it must be the most beautiful thing in the twenty-four hours."

"Have you really never seen the sun rise, Lady Henrietta? Yes, it is very beautiful."

Pam gazed dreamily at the sea as she spoke.

Peele frowned as he watched her. She had not looked at him once. "I should like," he said, his scruples and his wisdom suddenly vanquished by his longing to see her as he had seen her the other evening, "to see the sun rise. I have not done so for years."

"Should you?"

"Yes. I should like to see it rise—in Arcadia."

The girl gave a little irritated twist to her bare shoulders.

"Should you indeed?"

"Yes. And how should you, in the wisdom of your great youth, advise me to set about doing so?"

"Really, Mr. Peele, I haven't the slightest idea. Have you, Lady Henrietta?"

He bit his lip. He was not a vindictive man, but it annoyed him exceedingly to have her treat him in this way. It had been his duty to himself in the first place, but also both to his *fiancée* and to her, to plan leaving her, but he resented her taking this attitude towards him.

"I fear," he said, tossing away the end of his cigarette, "that I am too old both for Arcadia and for—sunrises. At my age one dreams of such things, and then—wakes up!"

The girl started as if he had struck her, and then, her quick intellect detecting the puerility of his revenge, she laughed. "I daresay," she answered good-humouredly; "every age has its pleasures." As she spoke, the musician in the shadowy street below began to tune his guitar, and as the chinking, twanging accompaniment commenced, Pam leaned back so that no one could see her face. She could bear no more.

"'Lisa, Lisetta, o sienti a me,'" the singer's voice rose through the sweet night air.

"'Lisa Lisett,'
'Se'll cuor' di mi cuor'!'"

CHAPTER IV

As the slow hours passed, the moonlight creeping slowly across the oiled brick floor, and moving over the painted walls, Pam lay in her bed, fighting her fight.

In her eighteen and a half years of life no one except poor Mr. Cunningham had ever attempted to implant in her mind one seed of conventional honour or unselfishness. She had been taught to say certain prayers, but not to pray; her mother had occasionally told her that it was wrong and unladylike to lie, but the beauty of abstract truth had never been pointed out to her; she had been told of a God who lived in the sky and who was omnipotent; of His Son, a man named Christ, who was born in a cow-shed and died on a cross, but of their majesty and mercy, nothing.

That she did not lie was because her nature was not ignoble; she had the habit of telling the truth, without reasoning, without effort, but she had also the habit of always, so far as lay in her power, doing whatever she wished to do, and her belief in her own will came very near to being her religion.

And now, that summer night she fought her fight, armed with the insufficient weapons that were in her poor little armoury. There was in her heart no blame for Peele. The memory of the long warm days when he had been ill, and they had been so happy together, prevented her from seeing him with all the clearness that was in her eyes for other people. If any one had done wrong it had been she herself. Even then, at Torpington, when she had bathed his forehead with eau de cologne and scolded him for his carelessness regarding his health—even then, he had been engaged, and she had known it!

"I should have kept away from him," she told herself with fierce misery. "How *could* I go to his house as I did? Oh, I was a fool, a fool!"

It was a wretched night, and when the clock outside her door struck four, her decision was but just made.

Lighting a candle she pattered over the cold floor to her little *secrétaire*, and after finding a sheet of square note-paper, and an oblong envelope, she went back to bed, and sat, huddled in the bed-clothes, the candle close at her elbow, scribbling rapidly with a blunt pencil which required a good deal of licking to make it write, until the clock had struck another quarter.

She folded her letter, addressed the envelope, and then, blowing out her light, said aloud, "Now, that's done! And it is day."

The daylight was coming in at the curtained windows, and the one that was open showed a square of almost amber-coloured sky.

"The sun is going to rise," the girl exclaimed aloud, her small face wan in the light; "sunrise in Arcadia!"

Rising, she thrust her bare feet into a pair of slippers, and wrapping herself in a dressing-gown, stole quietly down the corridor to Pilgrim's room.

That excellent woman was snoring as her young mistress entered, but a vigorous shake wakened her.

"Pilly! wake up, Pilly, you old sluggard!"

"Pam—Miss Pam—oh, dear me, what is the matter?"

"Nothing is the matter, but you and I are going to Paris this morning, so it's time to get up."

"To Paris!"

Pilgrim sat up and blinked wildly in her endeavour to seize the situation.

"Yes, to Paris. And then in a few days we're going on to your beloved Monks' Yeoland. Come, hurry. Put on the garb of sobriety and abstinence, and your hair, and we'll pack."

"Pack! As if I'd trust you to pack your own boots! I must say, Miss Pam, that I don't see why we can't wait until next week, as we 'ad intended. What will Mrs. Sacheverel say?"

"Mrs. Sacheverel will say, 'Pam can do no wrong.' So hurry, there's a good old crosspatch!"

The young girl went slowly back to her own room, and sitting down on the bed gave herself up to thought. She was still deep in her reverie when the clock's striking three-quarters aroused her, and springing up she went to the first of the darkened windows, and jerking back the curtains, thrust the blinds away. It was a splendid morning, crystal-clear and fresh. The roses that clambered up the side of the house hung sweet and dewy in the early air. As she leaned out, drawing a deep breath, one of the rose-sprays struck her cheek, sprinkling her with dew.

Smiling, she broke off a great soft bud and sniffed at it. To-morrow she would be in Paris!

And then suddenly her eyes fell on a man who was coming up the slope towards the house. It was Peele.

He walked slowly, almost irresolutely, and his shoulders drooped as if with great fatigue.

Pam watched him with a rush of her old absurdly maternal feeling. He looked ill, and——

She quite forgot that she, in her dressing-gown, was as visible to him as was he to her, and when at length he looked up and called her name, she started back as if she had but just perceived him.

"Pam."

Tossing the rose down to him as an answer, she withdrew from the window, and dressing hurriedly, went down stairs and out into the morning.

She found him sitting on the balustrade near which they had supped a few evenings before, his grey hair, ruffled and untidy, glistening in the light of the rising sun.

As she approached, he rose and came a few steps towards her.

"Pam!"

"Yes?"

"Little wretch—little goose—why did you treat me s abominably last night?"

She paused a few paces away from him, and bidding hi with a gesture to come no nearer, looked at him.

"Oh, Mr. Peele, you are ill! Good heavens, how you look!"

"Nonsense! I am not ill. This—this early light is not becoming. Pam, I didn't mean to come, but I couldn't help it."

"But—I know, I understand; don't try to explain. Listen; now that you are here, let's go up to the 'Belvedere' and watch the sunrise."

He put on his hat, and crossing the lawn they went in silence up through the trees to the little temple-like building at the top of the hill, and sat down facing the east.

"It is more beautiful than the sunset," Peele said at last.

Pam nodded. "Yes, Lady Henrietta was right. Mr. Peele," she went on, hurriedly, "here is a letter I have written to you. Will you read it?"

He took the envelope and turned it over in his hands.

"I have a letter for you too, Pam; a letter to post which I left the hotel two hours ago; I didn't post it."

"Give it to me."

Crossing to the opposite side of the pavilion, she turned her face away from him, and read what he had written.

"MY DEAR PAM,—I think, judging from the way in which you treated me last night, that you understand that there is nothing for us to do but say good-bye. I have walked up and down for hours thinking, but there is no other way. I am engaged and I have no excuse for breaking my word.

"So I shall go away to-morrow morning, and we will never meet again. Dear, we had our one evening in Arcadia, many people have less than that. God bless you.

"J. P."

She read this through twice, very slowly, and then seeing that he had dropped her note and sat staring vacantly before him, she said with a short laugh, "It would have its funny side if we had, each of us fleeing from the other, both taken the 10.13 express!"

"Oh, very funny, Pam—do you know that you are the most absurdly illogical woman in the world?"

“No. Why, am I?”

“Because”—he picked up the paper he had let fall, nd turning it over, read slowly aloud, “‘In two words, have *no* right to you, and she has.’ Now, just for the ake of argument, what difference does that right of hers ake to you? You have always insisted that every one as a right to take what he can get—that the weaker must o to the wall, that concentration and a strong will are the reatest powers in the world——”

“I know. I always believed it.”

“And your own mother did not hesitate to—take another woman's *husband*, yet you have never seemed to blame her!”

“No; I have never blamed her.”

“Then how,” he went on, with increasing irritation, rising and coming to where she stood, “how in the name of goodness could you write me such a letter?”

“It is a good letter.”

“It is a fool of a letter. Either you love me or you don't, and if you do, which I begin to doubt, what do you mean by all this stuff?”

Her mouth twitched with irrepressible amusement as she reached forward and took the offending missive from his hand.

“Sit down then and let me read it to you. And don't interrupt me, please. ‘Dear Mr. Peele, I cannot imagine how I could have, until last night, utterly forgotten Lady Henrietta. I *did* forget her, however, I suppose because I have a way of forgetting other people and their rights when I am concerned.’” The smile left her lips as she read on, and her voice deepened.

“‘You said, just before you left me in the olive grove that you would go away and never see me again, but when I found that we loved each other, I forgot that you had said that. Then when the Duchess's note came, I stupidly thought that it must have been suggested by you. Even then, in thinking of Lady Henrietta, I was only sorry for her.

“‘But when I saw her, then I felt that perhaps after al I should have to be sorry for myself. And I am sorry fo myself. I am also sorry for you, for I know that you will care, at least at first, but in a word, I have no right to you and she has.' All night I have been thinking and thinking, and now I have decided that we must not meet again. To make this easier, I shall go away to-morrow. You yourself will know that this is best for all three of us, and will understand. And now, at first, it is easy to separate,—that is, *easier*. If we got floundering in a morass of woe, it would be awfully bad for you, as well as awfully hard for us both.

" 'Mind, I am not saying that I feel exactly cheery just now, but *tout lasse, tout passe*. So good-bye, and God bless you. Pam.' "

"Now that," she added gaily as she finished, "is what I call a most admirable epistle!"

"Do you indeed! And you would actually have sneaked off without saying good-bye to me. And *tout passe*, does it?" He rose and walked nervously up and down.

"The truth is, my dear child, that you are no more in love with me than you are with—the Cham of Tartary."

"Am I not? But then, you have no means of gauging my feelings for that potentate—oh, Mr. Peele, don't look at me like that! I can't *bear* it!"

Catching his arm in both her hands she turned to him, her eyes full of tragedy. "You have no right to say that I don't care! Isn't it hard enough to bear without that?"

"Is it hard to bear, Pam?" he asked suddenly gentle. "Dear, I wonder whether we are going to be able to bear it?"

"Yes, oh yes. Listen! admit that it would almost ruin you to—break your engagement?"

"In a way it would."

"And admit that you love your career even more than you do me?"

He was silent. "I love my career very dearly——"

"Hush! don't weaken. It—your career—will never get old and wrinkled; it will never be ill; it will never contradict and torment you, and I should do all these things. All this, to say nothing of hurting *her* so terribly."

"But why should you mind hurting her? As I said a moment ago, I have never blamed your mother for doing what she did—and what she did was much more than what you might do."

There was a long pause, while the girl's eyes, sombre with thought, were turned to the sparkling sea.

At last she said, with a little frown of concentration, and speaking very slowly, "I'll tell you the honest truth. You are perfectly right in saying that I am illogical; if any one had put the case before me a week ago, I should have said without hesitating that I'd let you break your engagement. I'd have said that as long as we wanted each other, we ought to have each other. It would have seemed to me perfectly natural. But now, somehow—perhaps because I know Lady Henrietta and because I know that she loves you as much as I do—I simply can't do it."

"You have taken it all in your own hands, I observe! You leave nothing for me but passive obedience."

"You have taken your own steps! Here is your letter! Surely you have no right to scold me because we agree so perfectly!"

Throwing back his head with a little characteristic shake, he held out his hand to her.

"You are right. I am a fool. But—I love you, and men are less patient than women. Tell me once more that you love me, and I will go."

The colour faded from her face, but she gave him her hand. "I do love you—oh, I *do!*"

"You said I could never come to Arcadia, but—I broke my way through the hedge, and the thorns have hurt me."

She stood motionless, her face hidden against his breast.

"Pam, you are a very good woman; I am not a very good man, but I love you better for this."

She withdrew herself gently from his arms, and leaving the pavilion, walked to the nearest tree, and picked a little purple flower that grew at its roots.

"There," she said with a wan smile as she came back, and gave him the flower; "here is the Grand Order of the Knights Commander of Arcadia. Please keep it. And now—I will go down by the path. Good-bye."

"Pam, we have been very honourable, very reasonable. Cannot we have, out of all the days to come, just this one day?"

"How do you mean?"

"I mean, let me stay with you until this evening. Then I will go, and never come back. But, I don't think the gods could begrudge us just the one day together!"

"It will be harder then," she protested faintly.

"No, no; it will be easier, and we can have it to remember. Dear! We both know that it can't last; we are sternly practical as well as rigidly honourable people! We know that it would ruin my career as well as hurt our consciences. Pam, let us have one day!"

She burst into a soft tremulous laugh.

"Yes, we will have one day! Come, let's forget everything outside of Arcadia, and be happy—oh, let's be happy!"

Hand in hand they went down the hill.

CHAPTER V

As Pam knocked, Pilgrim opened her door and appeared, an austere vision in a black petticoat and stone-coloured stays. "I've got the big box packed, and will do the other one after breakfast," she began, with an aspect of chastened disapproval. "I suppose you'll wear your grey travelling-gown?"

"There's no hurry, Pilgrim," returned the girl coolly, "we aren't going until to-morrow!"

"Until to-morrow! *To-morrow!*" Pilgrim almost screamed, in her indignant surprise. "If we aren't going until to-morrow I must say that I think it was cruel to get a woman of my age up at such an hour to-day."

"I haven't the remotest idea how old you are, Pilly dear, but I *am* sorry. However, I thought that we were going to-day, and have changed my mind. Now just put on your dress, will you, and go and wake such slaves as are necessary for the preparation of a delicious little brekky for two!"

"For two? Breakfast for two?"

"Yes. Mr. Peele has come to spend the day with me. I hope the peaches aren't all gone? And we'll have boiled eggs and a nice rasher. Tell the cook that I want the coffee *black*, will you? And good cream. Now don't waste time scolding, we are starved as it is."

"I must say, Miss Pam, as I don't think——"

But Pam put her hands over her ears and ran downstairs whistling loudly. "Pilly," she announced a moment later to her guest, "is meditating poisoning you. She is simply bursting with disapproval."

"Poor Pilly!"

"Yes; she believes herself to have been sent into the world for the express purpose of looking after me. She finds me terribly trying at times!"

"I am sure of it. Do you usually get up at the ungodly hour of 5 A.M., may I ask?"

"Not I. I am like Dr. Johnson, a late riser, sir. This morning, as it happened, I had a *visit*. Tell me, Mr. Peele, if I had not chanced to see you from the window, what would you have done?"

Peele shrugged his shoulders. "Sat on the doorstep for a few hours until I could ring, I daresay. I had no intention of seeing you; I—I thought I didn't *want* to see you. I meant to merely look at the house and then go back to town. But, nevertheless, I should have been sitting on the doorstep if you hadn't looked out of the window."

"You frightened me, you looked so ill. I am afraid you are faint with hunger, too!"

"Well, to tell the truth, I am rather hungry! I ate no dinner last night for obvious reasons."

Less than an hour later they sat in the dining-room, enjoying the very good breakfast which the unfortunate Pilgrim had ordered for them.

There were roses in a glass bowl on the round table, the sun shone in at the windows and rested on the homely beauty of the pretty china and silver, and over the partakers of the breakfast hung the charm that lies in a *tête-à-tête* meal for a man and a woman who love each other.

"Two lumps of sugar!" laughed Pam. "Oh, what a sweet-tooth!"

"I don't take sugar with my peaches, though, and you do."

"If you don't want *all* the butter, I'd like some!"

"I beg your pardon. What a charming person your servant is. He has a smile like Rosina Filippi's!"

"Who is Rosina Filippi?"

"A very clever London actress, with the most delightful smile and laugh in the world."

"Antonio would be much pleased. Yes, he is really rather a dear. His beam is one of pure joy over my having company," she went on, rising and opening the door to admit Caliban, who came shuffling along after her, "and the knowledge that Pilgrim bitterly disapproves naturally lends an edge to his pleasure!"

"I see. How d'ye do, Caliban?"

"This is his own particular chair," Pam explained, putting the little beast in an old high-chair to which was fastened a tray, and pushing him to the table. "It used to be mine."

"Did it really? You mean that you used to sit in it when you were a baby?"

"Yes. The varnish is all scratched off the tray where I used to pound it with my spoon."

Peele laid his hand on the tray. "I wish I had known you when you were a baby, Pam."

"Do you? I was a funny brown thing with huge eyes and red hair."

"Red?"

"Yes. It was really almost red until I was four or five."

"When you were—say, two—isn't that the tray-pounding period?—I was a grown man!"

Pam watched him for a second in sober silence. "Let us, to-day," she began suddenly, "tell each other about ourselves—I mean, so that we can think about each other. Tell me about when you were a little boy. I remember the picture you showed me, taken when you were six, and how we shouted over your funny clothes and your roller-curl! But I mean, let's tell each other about what we *did* when we were children, and so on."

"I didn't do anything," he began helplessly. "I had a pony I used to ride and an old tortoise in the garden——"

"What was the pony's name?"

"Brown Bob."

"Well, go on. Did you have a governess? Whom did you play with?" she urged impatiently.

"I had a million governesses, one after the other. They all hated me—I wasn't a pleasant child."

"But you had no mother! *Pigs*, what did they expect? And with whom did you play?"

Caliban, at this point, very much bored, reached over suddenly, and plunging his hand into Peele's coffee, climbed out of his chair and flew to Pam, chattering distractedly for sympathy.

"It isn't burnt a bit, you fraud," she said sternly, examining the little member in question. "Lick it—it's nice and sweet. Mr. Peele takes *two* lumps of sugar! Another cup, Antonio. I have an idea," she added, as the servant withdrew, "I think I'll give you Cally as a souvenir."

"I'd rather have Pilly."

"She wouldn't go with you; she disapproves of you, barrel and stock, root and branch."

They finished their breakfast gaily, comparing notes about each other's childhood, laughing at the monkey's pranks, and studiously ignoring any reference to the future. Then they rose from the table, and without any discussion of the subject went down into the olive grove.

It was delightfully cool there, as yet, and the glimpses of the bright sea, with its hot glitter, were charming through the trees.

"What are you making?" Peele asked lazily from the grass on which he had thrown himself at her feet.

"A garland—a wreath," she answered, her small brown fingers busily twisting and turning the leaves she had gathered on her way across the terrace. "The peasants here make them. Shall I crown you?"

"I am too old, Pam. Green leaves don't suit grey hair," he said, a little sadly.

She laughed. "You old?"

"Yes, I might have been your father."

"Do you remember," she asked, her hands quiet for a moment among the glossy leaves, "my inventing a mother for you?"

"Yes. I have been lonely ever since."

"And do you remember making me promise not to 'run away with some fellow or do anything like that' without first telling you?"

"I remember it all, Pam. Every bit of it. I thought I had forgotten, but I see I had not. Your little blue skirt, your sailor hat, your duck shirts with the turquoise buttons——"

"And your yellow slippers! And the tea-pot with the big nick in it! And the quince jam!"

He nodded. "Do you remember how you used to rub my head with eau de Cologne when I had those beastly headaches?"

"Yes. I wonder—" She broke off short, frowning thoughtfully.

"Go on. What do you wonder?"

"Whether—it didn't all begin *then*."

He knew what she meant, and paused for a moment before answering.

"I hardly think so; you were a child."

"I know, and yet—it isn't as if I were a beauty—you couldn't very well have—cared for me *at once*, the other evening, unless we had known each other before."

"Perhaps not. Pam, do you wish I had not come?"

She raised her eyes and looked full into his. "No," she said slowly.

"If I hadn't, you would have been happier."

"I'm glad you came. Are you sorry?"

"I think that I am. Yes, I wish I had not come."

"That is, of course, individual. I am glad. Now my garland is done. Come and let me try it on."

Antonio, who understood a great deal of English although he could not speak it at all, was disappointed in Peele, as he served luncheon a few hours later.

"Love," he observed to the inimical Pilgrim, whose unnecessary presence in the kitchen was perhaps not wholly accidental, "is queer thing, isn't it?"

Pilgrim sniffed indignantly.

"There is the signore—the signore of the signorina!—he is not so old, in spite of his hair, and he adores the signorina, yet what do they talk of? Politics! And every one knows how corrupt English politics are, and how dull! I suppose the signore is a senator, Miss Pillagrim?"

"We don't 'ave senators in England," snapped that excellent creature, with the natural disdain of a British female for a mere Italian. "And why shouldn't they talk politics? Thank God, they *do!*" she added in an undertone.

Whereupon Antonio, who had heard her last words, and who was in his way a humourist, winked at the cook.

CHAPTER VI

"WILL you go with me to the Villa below, to look for some things that I have to send to Paris?"

"Is there any place whither I will not go with you?" returned Peele gravely.

It was four o'clock, and the two stood by the window in the cool drawing-room, looking out into the sunny garden.

Ever since luncheon they had been in the house, for the day had grown to be very warm, and Pam had, as was her custom, arranged in the myriad vases the flowers brought in to her from the little greenhouse in the kitchen-garden.

They had opened the piano, too, on which Pam knew not one note from another, and Peele had played for her all he could recall of a "piece" called "The Waterfall," taught him years ago by one of his governesses.

"She had red shiny hands," he said, "with a wart on her left third finger. Her name was Bunce, and her father had been a dean. How I hated her!"

"You must have been a horrid little boy!"

"I had no mother," he retorted gravely, using her own words. It had been a charming afternoon altogether. They had asked each other all sorts of questions, the answers to which, Pam said with a little laugh, would make a part of the great memory.

She learned that he hated poetry, and that when he read for his pleasure, it was chiefly historical biography. He cared nothing for science, or for classical music; he loved pictures, however. His favourite picture was Luke Fildes' *The Doctor*, which she had never seen, and which he described to her at length.

"The man's face," he said, "is wonderful; such a mixture of pity, tenderness, and resignation to the limitations of his own powers; you must go and see it sometime."

"Ah, yes, I shall go."

He had not kissed her, he had hardly touched her hand, but they had, in the concentration of their minds, been wonderfully close to each other.

"Do you recite now?" he asked once.

"How do you know I ever recited?"

"The Duchess told me."

"Ah yes, I recite sometimes, but I don't care for it as much as I used to. When I was very little I used to know a lot of Italian poems by heart, but I am too old for them now! And English poetry is not musical—except Keats, who is not dramatic—and Herrick."

"Recite something to me now, Pam, one of your favourite things." And when she began, standing with lightly clasped fingers before him, he knew that she had made this choice because it held no emotions.

> "I sing of Brooks, of Blossoms, Birds and Bowers:
> Of April, May, of June and July flowers.
> I sing of May-poles, Hock-carts, Wassails, Wakes,
> Of Bridegrooms, Brides, and of their Bridall-cakes."

"Aren't the words all lovely?" she broke off; "it is the liquid l's that make *Italian* so musical too. Listen!

> "I sing of Dewes, of Raines, and piece by piece
> Of Balme, of Oyle, of Spice and Amber-greece.
> I sing of Times trans-shifting; and I write
> How Roses first came red, and Lillies white.
> I write of Groves, of Twilights, and I sing,
> The Court of Mab, and of the Fairie-King.
> I write of Hell, I sing (and ever shall)
> Of Heaven, and hope to have it after all!"

"The Court of Mab and of the Fairie King! You ar almost small enough to be Queen Mab, but you are to brown!"

"Queen Mab was no bigger than my thumb! Do yo

"I do. And I envy the writer because though he wrote of Hell, he hoped for Heaven after all."

There was a short pause, and then suddenly she changed the subject by asking him to go to the Villa Vaucourt with her.

"I had a note from Madame de Vaucourt yesterday asking me to look up one or two things that she forgot," she continued a few moments later, as they went down the path, the sun shining on her hair and making it almost copper-coloured.

"The farmer's wife airs the villa, and so on, and I've had her open the blinds." She swung the key on one finger as she spoke.

"Friends of yours, I suppose?"

"Obviously! They used to live here every winter, and we knew them very well, but for the last two or three years they have not stayed long, and now—" They had turned to the right and come into a domain much more pretentious than the one above, Peele noticed; the well-gravelled paths were broad, and the flower-beds in front of the house laid out with some skill.

"I feel like Marat or Danton, or some one of those creatures, making a *visite domiciliaire*," exclaimed the girl, fitting the key into the lock, and opening the door. "*Brrr!* how musty it smells! I must give Margarita a wigging. I don't believe the windows have been open for weeks."

She opened a door to the right of the black and white marble entrance-hall, and he followed her into what, to his surprise, he perceived to be a furnished drawing-room. The sun, streaming in, fell on yellow satin chairs and sofas, on inlaid tables, handsome rugs, and a hundred graceful knicknacks which gave it a curiously inhabited air.

"This looks as though the mistress of the house would come down in a moment and ask us what the deuce we are doing here!" he exclaimed. "Not in the least like an empty house."

"That's because she left so suddenly, poor dear; and she had no heart to pack. Ah no, she'll never come back," returned the girl with a sigh, sitting down at a small ormolu *secrétaire* and opening it.

"Why is she a poor dear? And why won't she come back?" Peele leaned against the wall, and folding his arms watched her as with an obvious reluctance she opened the little drawers one by one.

"Because her husband has run away from her, and because she is very unhappy."

"By Jove! What is their name, did you say?"

"De Vaucourt. Oh dear, I *hate* to look through these papers, but she wants his letters."

"Vaucourt! I say, Pam, had she been married before?"

"Yes, the first husband was a M. de Boissy, I think."

Peele frowned. "Well, upon my word! Delphine de Boissy a friend of yours!"

The girl turned the letters in her hand. "Why not?" she asked curiously.

"Why, because she—did your mother know her?"

"Of course. Father and M. de Vaucourt were great friends."

Peele said nothing for a moment, while he struggled with his impulse to curse the selfish carelessness of Sacheverel and Pauline.

"So the fellow married her," he said presently, as Pam closed the *secrétaire*, and led the way upstairs, the packet of letters in her hand.

"Yes. And then about two months ago he left her. Father said he behaved like a brute. She wrote and wrote, but he didn't answer her letters, and at last she went after him and found——"

"Yes, and found?"

"Found him living very comfortably in the Avenue Kléber with a young person whose—cheeks didn't bag."

"*Bag?*"

"Yes. Poor Madame de Vaucourt's do bag horribly of late; the skin seems to have got loose in a most unattractive way. She is pretty old, you know, and it seems to be only in books that people enjoy growing old together, like John Anderson and his wife, or Darby and Joan. I am sure," she went on, opening the blinds of the room into which she had led the way, and looking at him with great solemnity, "that Mrs. Anderson's cheeks were baggy, and that Joan wore a snuff-coloured front, and yet, what did John Anderson and Darby care? Not a pin, the old dears, but then, they lived in Arcadia!"

"What an abominable cynic you are! Do you really mean that you think real people never love each other all their lives?"

"Oh yes, sometimes. Father and mother will." Her voice was very gentle, as she knelt by a Venetian wedding-chest and opened it.

"And you explain their case by the fact that they were not married until the other day! That's like your absurd *tout lasse, tout passe,*" he went on with a sudden irritation that surprised himself. He had had no intention of protecting the institution of matrimony against her, but her attitude annoyed him beyond control. "You really ought to stop arguing in this ridiculous way, Pam; it puts you in a very false position."

She turned, a long strip of yellow lace in her hands, and stared up at him in unfeigned wonder.

"What on earth have I said? Why are you so cross?"

"You haven't exactly *said* anything, just now, but I remember your old jeremiads against matrimony, and it has occurred to me that you are too old now for that sort of thing. It used to be amusing, but it is both silly and unwise now."

She frowned, and then as suddenly laughed.

"Well, of all bears! Haven't I a right to my own opinion?"

"Yes, to an opinion, but not to a harmful, wrong-headed prejudice. You have no right to rail against something of which you have, unfortunately, seen nothing."

There was a long pause, during which she folded her lace without turning her eyes from his face.

"I have seen more than you think," she said quietly. "My grandfather and my grandmother hated each other; my aunt Rosamund is wretched with Mr. Maxse, and she bores him to death; the Rector at Yeoland and his wife are very polite and ceremonious to each other, but they live in opposite corners of the Rectory; then there was my father and poor Mrs. Kennedy, and now the Vaucourts!"

In its way her evidence was overwhelming. Her life, he saw, had been such that in naming these few examples of marital misery, she had mentioned almost all the married couples she had ever known. For a moment, Peele was staggered, and then he recovered himself. "Yours has been an exceptional as well as an unfortunate experience, dear," he said, "but believe me, in the end law and order must prevail."

Pam shook her head gently. "Why waste time in quarrelling about the Kaiser's beard?"

"But it *isn't* about the Kaiser's beard! It is of the utmost importance."

"Not to me."

As she spoke, she turned and once more bent over the chest in which she was searching.

"Men will want to marry you," he went on with a ang of fierce jealousy.

"But I shall not want to marry them. Ah, here it is, he crucifix. Poor thing, it was her mother's." As she poke, the stable clock struck slowly, and involuntarily, as hey both counted its strokes she turned and looked at im, the ivory crucifix pressed to her breast.

"Five! Pam, the day will soon be gone—our day—he end is coming!"

"No, no, not the end! I can't bear it!" For a moment they stared at each other in silence. Then Peele said hoarsely, "Nor can I! Pam, we can't do it! God knows we've tried, but we can't, and thank God that we can't—come!"

Almost roughly, he drew her to her feet and caught her in his arms. "Pam, we have tried, and failed."

"Yes, we have failed."

Neither of them knew how long it had been when he raised his head from hers, and after a moment's further silence she said suddenly in a strange, harsh voice, "You will not ask me to marry you?"

"Pam!"

"Yes. You know I cannot do that."

"You must!"

"I cannot. Do not ask me that."

The turn affairs had taken was bewildering and almost ludicrous. That he, who had never, until five minutes ago, dreamed of the folly of marrying her, should be urging her to marry him, and that she should be refusing!

"Jim, I love you more than anything in the world; I will do anything for you, I will go anywhere with you—to-morrow if you like, but that one thing I cannot do."

Peele set his teeth and forced her creeping hands from his shoulders. The moment was a crucial one, and he realised it. Not only all his love for the innocent fool in his arms but all that was best of the manhood in him, rose to combat her folly.

"Pam, for God's sake listen to me. You are a child, and must trust me. You *must* marry me, or I shall go away and never see you again."

She drew away from him, her face cold. "I *will* not."

"You must. I should be the greatest scoundrel—don't make me afraid of myself."

"I will not marry you," she answered slowly, and very distinctly. He felt that he had lost his cause, and to his bitter shame he realised that in the bottom of his heart there was a throb of gladness.

Then suddenly a creeping sensation of cold sickness came over him, and he put his hand blindly to his throat.

"I—fear I am going to faint," he said slowly; "don't be frightened." But she was so frightened that when he came to, a few minutes later, her face, looking old and worn in its agony, was as white as his own.

"Jim, my dearest, I thought, oh, I thought—" Her eyes filled and the hot tears fell on his cheek.

His heart smote him. "Pam, you see your obstinacy nearly killed me; now you must promise. You must give up this mad idea, my poor child, and I too must give up much. You must marry me."

Her mouth trembled piteously as she looked at him through her tears. "I can't, oh, I can't! Listen, you are ill, we can't discuss it now; we will go back into Arcadia for our tea, and when we are in England we can plan things."

He sighed, and rising, picked up his hat. He was glad to quit the subject; his strength, in two senses, was about gone.

Half dazed he watched her gather up the letters, the crucifix, and the eider-down shawl she had found, and a few minutes later, her strong young shoulder giving him more than a nominal support, they crossed the boundary and went back into Arcadia.

PART VI

CHAPTER I

"Now, Pilly, you are to go back to the hotel and have your tea with Caliban. I am going to make a visit."

The *facre* had stopped in front of Brentano's, and after several minutes Pam had come out of the shop and now stood looking with mild amusement into her maid's horrified face.

"A visit! In Paris! I really don't think, Miss Pam, as you ought to do such things."

"Sorry, but I must. Is my veil all right?"

The young girl wore a simple tailor-made gown and a very smart black hat that she had bought that morning. Pilgrim, eyeing her with disapproval of her acts, could not withhold a certain grudging admiration for her looks.

The girl was curiously graceful, even in this day of graceful women, and the unusually long slope of her erect shoulders gave her, in conjunction with the alert carriage of her small head, a very distinguished air.

The day was one of those warm, exciting, Paris spring days, when something delightful seems to the young to be on the very point of happening. Pam's eyes were bright, her cheeks faintly tinged with pink.

"Doesn't Paris make you feel wicked, Pilly?" she asked suddenly with a laugh of pure pleasure; "it does me, and it makes me feel that wicked things are really *good!*"

Pilgrim clasped her grey cotton hands imploringly.

"Oh, Pam, do take me with you! I can sit in the hall, you know, or even in the cab. Other young ladies don't go raging about all alone."

Pam stared. "Raging? Oh, well, you poor thing, console yourself, for I'm not going to range. I'm going to make one visit, and then I shall come back to the hotel, and you know we are going to the theatre. So good-bye. Don't worry, Pilly. I'll be as good as gold, really I will."

After glaring with hatred and ferocity at a young man who, attired in the fashion of the following month, had come to a standstill and was eyeing Pam with unconcealed admiration, Pilgrim sighed resignedly.

"Very well, I've done my best, as I shall tell Mrs. Sacheverel. I hope at least that you are going to see a lady."

Pam stared again, and her frankly puzzled stares were very characteristic of her. "To see a lady? Of course I am; you don't think I'm going to see a gentleman, do you?"

Pilgrim tossed her head. "I don't know, I'm sure. You used to, last year, in Torpington."

Pam got into the shabby vehicle and leaned back in one corner. "Sure enough, so I did," she returned carelessly. "Well, I'm older now, and have given up that habit. Now don't get lost, Pilgrim—the hotel is just up the second street, you know. And *don't speak to any one you don't know!*"

As the wretched maid walked away in slow dignity, Pam gave an address to the cabby, and moved off in the other direction, still smiling over her little joke.

It was evening, and the sunshine began to pale; the air was sweet with the odours that awaken even in great cities, when spring comes down that way.

The Champs Elysées was crowded with beautiful carriages filled with beautifully dressed women, flowers were for sale everywhere, the sky was blue, the trees delicately green. Pam was very happy. Only two days before she had been in Arcadia with Peele, and now, because he loved her and she loved him, she was happy in Paris without him.

The day in Arcadia had undone her resolution to give up Peele, not because she had learned that she could not do it, but because some instinct told her that it would hurt him to give her up. The moment that conviction had come to her, her scruples had melted into nothingness, and she mentally sacrificed the Lady Henrietta with the incidental pity a high priest of old must have felt for the lamb whose throat he cut to do honour to his god.

And now there remained in her mind but the one problem—whether she should marry Peele.

Her dislike of the idea of tying herself for life was a perfectly sincere one; whatever her faults were, they were not those of a *poseuse*. The thought of saying the words she had lately heard her mother say was utterly repugnant to her; she did not believe in the binding quality of such promises, and she had never broken her word in her life.

Peele had left her that evening two days before, believing her unshaken in her determination; she knew this, and yet she knew that his words had not been without effect. His faint had so terrified her that it had required all her strength to persist after it in the refusal she had given him before it.

His love for her seemed so wonderful, so incomprehensible, that she would have been glad of an occasion to make some tremendous sacrifice for him; and yet her mad ideal of absolute freedom had grown with her growth and seemed a part of her very bone and muscle.

When the *fiacre* stopped after ten minutes easy progress, before a charming little hotel with a coat-of-arms in stone over the door, the girl was deep in thought and roused herself with an effort.

The servant who answered her ring looked at her in some surprise. "Yes, Madame was at home, certainly, but Madame was very ill."

"Just give her this card, will you?"

A moment later she found herself standing on the threshold of a great bare room in the centre of which stood a large mahogany bed with brocaded curtains.

"Pam!"

Carissima!"

The great Ravaglia held out her hand without moving her body, and bending over the embroidered pillows, the young girl kissed her on both cheeks.

"You here, Pam! I cannot believe it," the actress went on in Italian.

"No? And yet here I am! But you—you are ill!"

"Yes, so ill, that when I saw your card I thought I was delirious again."

"Did you remember my name at once?" Pam sat down easily on the edge of the bed, and took off her hat uninvited. "It is very long since you have seen me!"

The sick woman smiled faintly. "Oh, very long—three years! Ah yes, I knew your name. As to your face, you have changed very little, except that you are older."

There was a short pause, after which she added softly, "I have never played *Pia* since, without thinking of you. Do you remember?"

"Indeed I do remember. That is why I came. But tell me first, what is the matter with you?"

Ravaglia smiled, her yellow face wrinkling amazingly. "The matter? Nothing; I am just dying. Please don't make a fuss," she added with sudden fretfulness; "I hate talking about it. Tell me about yourself. Are your father and mother here?"

"No. I brought Pilgrim and Caliban with me."

"Poor old Pilgrim! Who is Caliban? Ah, yes, I know now. Well, you are alone in Paris with a maid and a monkey?"

Pam laughed suddenly. "Yes, is it dreadful? However, we are going on to England, to my grandfather's to-morrow. I stopped over here to ask your advice about something."

"My advice! My dear child, *en voilà une idée asse rigolo!* About what?"

The girl was silent for a moment, marshalling her words and then she spoke.

"You remember telling me that somewhere in the world there was a man whom I should—love? Well, he ha come."

The tragedian, whose life, for all its triumphs, had been so much more tragic than any of her dramas, drew a long breath.

"You, little Pam? Go on."

"He is very much older than I; he is quite old——"

As she paused, the sick woman opened her eyes suddenly, very wide, and turned her head sharply. "It isn't Charnley Burke?" she asked.

"Charnley Burke? Good Heavens, no!"

There was a short pause, after which Ravaglia bade the girl go on with her story.

"He is James Peele. I met him long ago at my grandfather's. He is a politician, and very brilliant. I don't know," she added with real humility, but a proud look in her eyes, "why he cares for me, but he does."

"I think I can guess why, *carina*. Well, you are engaged?"

The last of the afternoon sun was coming in at the window, and fell full on Pam's face. Her eyes were, Ravaglia saw with a pang, like her own at that moment. The actress, who was a Sicilian, was superstitious, and her breath caught in her throat as she recognised in the young girl's eyes the look that she believed to be fateful.

"No," Pam said slowly, "he is engaged to the Duchess of Wight's daughter."

In her relief the elder woman laughed aloud, and catching the girl's hand kissed it. "Engaged! Only that! Then it is all right, thank God!"

Pam looked at her gravely. "You mean because he is not married?"

"Yes. Thank God! *Ah!*" Her short cry of pain frightened Pam, and slipping from the bed, she was about to ask if she could nothing to relieve her, when she saw that Ravaglia had fainted.

Ringing the bell hastily, she dipped her handkerchief in some water and laid it on the strangely waxen-looking forehead, and when the maid came in, and some drops had been administered, the sick woman at length opened her eyes and tried to smile.

"I fainted again, did I?" she asked. "I hope you weren't frightened, little Pam?"

"I was though. Mr. Peele fainted the other day, and now you do it too! It is awful. I will go now; you are too tired."

"Yes, I am too tired, but you mustn't go. I haven' yet given you my advice," the actress went on, half playfully, but with an evident effort. "Sit down and let me do it."

Pam obeyed in silence, and after a moment Ravaglia went on.

"I am glad for you that this man is not married, dear and, the only thing for him to do is to break his engagement. That is my advice; and then he must marry you at once. I am glad for you, but I am sorry for poor Burke."

"Burke!" ejaculated the girl. "Why do you speak of him?"

"He is here, and he has told me about you. He is a good man, as men go, and he is not a prig. He would make an admirable husband."

"He is here, you say? In Paris?"

"Yes, yes, in Paris; why shouldn't he be in Paris He comes often to see me, and we talk of you. He love you very dearly, Pam."

"I know. I wish he didn't. Do you happen to know whether he is going down to Monks' Yeoland soon? I am and I do hope he isn't."

"He is not. He was going south to-morrow—to se you. He has your father's permission, and I think if you say no, he will go back to Australia."

"If I say no!"

"Ah, I understand; you think that only your Mr. Peele exists, dear child, but Burke will go on existin nevertheless. Pam," she went on hurriedly, catching th girl's hands and holding them in a hot, nervous clasp, " am glad you came! You should not have come, and n one must know that you did, but I am glad. I have s longed to see you; I have thought so much of you. Di they tell you that my little girl died?"

"No!"

"Yes, she died. If I had but known that she had no uture I might have kept her with me, and how I would have loved her. Ah, they might have let me know, they might have let me know!"

As she finished speaking she burst into a fit of crying that shook her whole body, her thin hands clasped tight over her face.

Pam knelt by her in mute sympathy, her own eyes full of tears. After a few minutes Ravaglia became quiet, and lay with half-closed eyes in a state of exhaustion. Pam watched her for some time, and then rose. She could not go on with her story; the woman was too ill to be troubled, and it was late.

She said good-bye to her very gently, kissing her poor faded face repeatedly. "I will write to you," she said. 'I must go on to-morrow, for I have written, but oh Carissima, I wish I could stay!"

"Nonsense, dear. I wouldn't let you stay. I should not have let you come, if I had known. I am glad that I did not know! You must go. Tell your grandfather that I kept my word, dear."

"My grandfather! You know him?"

"Yes. And Burke will be coming to see me. What shall I tell him?"

Pam paused. "Tell him," she said, after a moment, with deliberate slowness, "that I am very sorry; that I love another man with my whole heart, and that because of that I do not wish to see him."

"You are right. I will tell him. And now, good-bye. Come and let me bless you, if you think my blessing—"

"Hush, Carissima!"

The young girl, her mind still heavy with the burden she had hoped to unload here, knelt simply like a child by the bed, and bent her head to the failing hand.

A moment later she was driving rapidly through the streets, her eyes wet, her heart heavy.

Ravaglia was dying, and Ravaglia was to be the first person she knew to go through the Great Gate.

CHAPTER II

"MONKS' YEOLAND, *Wednesday.*

"DEARS BOTH,—After divers and varied adventures by sea and land, we arrived here on Saturday, and I should have written before only I have been frightfully busy, and I knew you wouldn't worry.

"Well, to go back to Paris. I looked up Madame Fernande, and she measured me for my gown for the wedding, and two others. She says my figure is very good, and I think she's right, too. She's making me a biscuit-coloured cloth gown trimmed with a sort of green and gold braid (sounds appalling, but it isn't), a blue *crêpe de chine,* and the wedding garment, which is, as mother advised, also pale blue, a lovely gauzy, chiffony thing with a silk stripe, which makes Pam, 'in the dusk with the light behind her,' appear a very attractive young person. I also got some hats—one is lovely, very flat, all black, and joy of joys, *not* lop-sided.

"Pilly was *dreadful* in Paris—on the point of bursting into loud lamentations all the time; I had my hair washed at Lenthéric's, and the man dressed it in a lovely way, low, smooth on top, and parted. I told Pilgrim to watch how he did it, but she glared so he asked me to have her stop, as she made him nervous. In the afternoon we drove a long time, I bought mother's silk stockings, and did *some* other errands, and then I went to see Madame Ravaglia. The Duchess (with whom I dined just before I left home) told me Ravaglia was going to have a sale of all her things as she was ill. She is very ill, in bed, and I nearly cried. She says that she is dying, and I believe it. Her little girl is dead, too. She was heavenly to me. I forgot to ask her about the sale. It all seems so sad, but

I believe she is glad to die. She told me by the way, that Charnley Burke was on the point of going to a certain villa on a certain coast, to say certain things of grave import to a certain young female. Really, do you think it was fair to give him leave to pop in on me, like that? Thank goodness, I got away in time! I always liked him, but that is 'just as far as the tale goes,' and you two ought to know it. Madame Ravaglia is going to tell him this, so you needn't manœuvre!

"In the evening we, Pilly and I, went to see *Entre Arbre et Écorce.* Awfully well acted, but it was just as well that Pilly didn't understand it all. Guess who sat in a *baignoire* near us? M. de Vaucourt! He is thinner and looked quite young. Very well got up, of course, and either his hair is beginning to grow, or he is wearing a craftily made scratch.' The girl with him was as lovely as an angel, and I heaved a sigh for poor 'Delphine!' He came and spoke to me, and the following dialogue ensued.

"'*He.* Mais, Mademoiselle Pam! Que je suis enchanté de vous revoir!'

"'*Me.* Trop aimable, Monsieur!'

"'*He.* And Madame votre mère, et Monsieur votre père, sont-ils avec?'

"'*Me.* No, I am alone with my maid.'

"'*He.* Will you allow an old friend to compliment you on your beauty?'

"'*Me.* Flattery is always acceptable.'

"'*He.* You have just come from home?'

"'*Me.* Yesterday. I am going on to England to-morrow.'

"'*He.* I go south next week—to close my villa, alas.'

"'*Me.* Ah!'

"'*He.* The world no doubt looks very bright to your bright eyes, Mademoiselle; to me, alas! there are in my heart yawning gaps that never can be bridged.'

"'*Me* (*coldly*). Oh!'

"'*He.* I shall hope to see your parents, Mademoislle Pam; I should not like them to believe me worse than am.'

"'*Me.* I do not think there is any danger of that' (*sweetly*).

"'*He (after a suspicious stare).* 'Well, I must be o came with my brother-in-law, and must rejoin him, making my visits.'

"Then he went; and Pilgrim, whose feelings wer usual, almost too much for her, abused him until I snub her violently.

"I had brought the crucifix, &c., that Madame de V had asked me to look up for her, and sent them to her th next morning. I didn't go myself, for I had no time.

"We had a brute of a crossing, and I blush to stat that I was most awfully sick for an hour. So was Caliban Pilgrim was well all the way, but not particularly companionable.

"It poured in London, so I took a four-wheeler and did my errands. I met Mrs. Cunningham in the Burlington Arcade. She told me all the Monks' Yeoland news, and we lunched together at Prince's. I adore big restaurants. She—Mrs. Cunningham—told me that poor Cecil Morecambe, Evy's old adorer, had dined with her and Mr. Cunningham the evening before, and that he was very unhappy about the wedding. He has a living in Chelsea.

"I got my present for Evy, and it is really a corker; a big white ostrich feather fan mounted in yellow tortoiseshell. I'm having her monogram put in in little diamonds.

"Pilgrim had two teeth out, poor dear, and I bought her a new dress and a black cape. I do so love having my own banking-account! I also had my picture taken. The man was very funny. He is a little, wild-eyed, red-haired Yid, and jumped about his camera and waved his arms in the funniest way. The proofs came this morning, and are pretty good. Grandfather says the one I like might be either Cally or me, but the other, the one *he* likes, looks like a tooth-paste advertisement.

"G. F. met me at the station, and we fell on each other's necks and wept for joy.

"Before he had a chance to speak I told him that as I had decided to forgive him, we would let bygones be bygones and not reopen old disputes! From the way he laughed at that very silly joke I judged that he has been pretty dull of late, and I find that I was not mistaken.

I t[illegible]velyn and Aunt Rosamund are very busy with the tha[illegible]ng preparations, of course. Mr. Maxse is ill, and villa[illegible] has been having a flirtation with a barmaid in Imu[illegible]—a cheerful divinity called Maudie, who appears fa[illegible]ve conceived the idea of becoming Mrs. Yeoland. g[illegible]G. F. had hopes that Ratty would succumb to t[illegible] charms (which are considered, you will be glad to [illegible]ar, to have augmented considerably within the last [illegible]ar), and though I sternly refused to exercise those [illegible]arms towards the unlawful ends contemplated by that [illegible]cked old man, only modesty prevents my stating that [illegible]e fair Maudie's chances are rapidly waning, since my [illegible]ival!

"Evelyn is very handsome, and seems much pleased with herself and her prospects.

"Sir George Chesney is pretty awful, I think—a short man with small eyes and a mean mouth—but he is in love with her, and has given her the loveliest things. I am glad that no one who owns a pink pearl pendant like hers has a fancy to possess my soul!

"They are going to Paris, and thence automobiling through Brittany. Mr. Maxse is very ill, and I am terribly sorry for him. He says he has every known disease except the bubonic plague. When I have time I read aloud to him. I don't think any of the others except grandfather realise how ill he is.

"Cazzy is as great a love as ever. His head is literally *quite* bald, except a little fringe over his ears and across the back, and he is getting fat. I do love him. He sends all sorts of messages to you both, and the dear old thing has—guess what? A *wedding present* for you! It's a beautiful crystal bowl that belonged to his mother. I had tea with him yesterday, and we had a very good time together. Well, this letter is long enough, and I must go do-do. To-morrow is the wedding, and my frock is perfect. The Duchess and Lady Henrietta are here. I have not yet seen them, and the Duchess has just sent her maid to ask me to go in to her for a minute. I'll write all about the wedding before long.

"Lovingly, PAM."

"*P.S.*—"Of course in the dialogue between me and M. de Vaucourt, I should have put '*He—I.*' only 'I' looks all wrong to me, somehow."

When she had addressed and stamped her letter, Pam rose, and tying the ribbons of her white dressing-gown into a neat bow, swung her long plaits over her shoulders, and crossing the dimly lighted corridor, knocked at the Duchess's door.

Her Grace, who was sitting by her dressing-table in a very gorgeous black satin kimono, greeted the girl with enthusiasm.

"Well, you dreadful little creature, how are you! And why did you bolt away like that! Don't sit down on Bijou—there's a chair. Will you have some Bovril? Or some Force? Then tell me; why aren't you going to be bridesmaid?"

Pam started. "Because I am never going to be bridesmaid," she answered, "and anyway, I'd have looked like a nigger among all those blonde girls!"

"Bah! *You* aren't vain, I know better! Your grandfather thinks it's because you don't like George Chesney. Perhaps he's right."

"Perhaps he is," returned the girl gravely.

"Evy told me she was very much disappointed."

"Yes; she is a dear, Evy. How is Lady Henrietta?"

The Duchess set down her cup, unpinned a beautiful coil of mahogany-coloured hair, laid it on the table, and then, turning said, her eyes fixed closely on Pam's, "I want to talk to you about Henny, Pam."

"To *me!*"

"Yes, to you. *You* are a ridiculous runaway thing, but you are shrewd, and you are truthful. I think, too, that you *like* Henny."

"I do like her; I do, indeed, but ——"

"Now for heaven's sake don't be tiresome and have *scruples*. If I choose to talk to you about my daughter it is surely my affair!"

Pam looked steadily at her, frowning as she answered. "or—hers?"

"If you like. Listen, that night when you dined with us, I saw you watching her as if you understood. Did you? I mean you saw, that she looked ill and worried. Did you guess why?"

"I guessed, yes. My guess may not have been correct."

"It probably was, however. It was that Jim Peele is not making her happy, wasn't it?"

"*Yes.*"

The Duchess, who seemed, with the removal of part of her hair, to have taken off something of her garment of manner, went on slowly, with serious directness.

"You saw a good deal of him last spring, he told us, and your eyes are keen and young. I never thought that he cared for her really, and now I think she is beginning to think so too."

Pam had grown pale, and her eyes were very like Caliban's as she listened.

"Henny is very beautiful, and she has been much admired," the Duchess resumed, "but she is not spoiled; she was never clever, but she was always sweet and good, and she deserves to be happy—not that that is the best reason for her being so! However, when she fell in love with Jim Peele, I didn't make even the nominal protest I might have made. The man was, of course, her social inferior, but she had refused dozens of men and she was thirty. So they became engaged. The result is that she is losing her looks, and crying her eyes out because he treats her as he does. He is polite and kind enough, he never flirts, he seems to have no bad habits—and I, *moi qui vous parle*, am at my wit's end!"

Pam had listened with a curious withholding of action; with a feeling that for her was the *rôle* of absolute passivity; that something outside of herself would give her a mental lead. Now, when the Duchess stopped speaking, and looked expectantly at her, the girl returned her glance with grave attention, but did not answer, and after a pause the old woman went on. "I daresay you think me as mad as a hatter, to be saying all this to you, but as I said I am at my wit's end, and there is no one else of whom I can ask an opinion."

"An opinion!"

"Yes. Algy—my son—is a mere boy, and devoted to Mr. Peeler; my other daughter has met him only once and can have no opinion, and you know him, and have recently seen them together. Will you tell me, in a word, what you think the trouble is? Is it that the man has no heart in him, or is it that he loves some one else?"

Pam stared, still feeling that she need not act; that some one else would act for her. And before the pause had grown to be too long, a brisk knock came to the door.

"Mrs. Maxse's compliments, Miss, and would you be so kind as to go to Mr. Maxse for a moment? 'E 'as been took bad."

Pam followed the servant down the passage, after a hasty good-night to the Duchess, telling herself that she had known that the message would come.

CHAPTER III

A SLEEPLESS night is bad for one's looks, even in one' teens, and Pam, as she cast a final glance at herself in th glass before leaving her room the next morning, mad a face and shrugged her shoulders.

"If candour were your leading characteristic, Pilly," she remarked, taking her gloves from her hand, "you would agree with me that I would rejoice Mr. Darwin's eyes to-day—but for the fact that he is dead—as an overwhelming argument in favour of his theory!"

"You hadn't ought to make faces, Miss Pam; you'll have wrinkles before you are twenty, if you do; you 'aven't got your mother's skin."

"What a horrid idea! Imagine poor mother if I *had* her skin! Pilly, you do say the most *saugrenue* things. Now mind you don't let Caliban get away, or he'll come to church as sure as eggs is eggs. Heavens, how ugly I am to-day!"

Pilgrim watched her young mistress out of sight and then with the sigh that had become chronic of late, set to work arranging the room which looked, as was usual to it after the performance of a grand toilette by its present inhabitant, much as though it had been swept by a cyclone.

"She didn't sleep, I know she didn't," the good woman said to herself as she emptied the candlestick of half a dozen burnt matches, "and she only began that book yesterday. That means she read in the night; and she wrote too. Ever since that man came to the villa she 'asn't been the same. *'Ow* I wish 'e'd died when 'e was teething!"

Tears welled slowly into her unattractive eyes as she worked; she was very troubled about her young mistress.

and she did not know to whom to go for help. Even while she knew that Pam would surely insist not only on dreeing her own weird, but also on dreeing it in her own way and time, Pilgrim could not watch the progress of events without at least attempting to turn them from the way in which she believed them to be moving.

And when she had settled down to some work in her room, her mind was busy with the subject of Peele. That morning she had learned to her surprise that Peele was to be at the wedding. The Duchess's maid had told her, and though Pilgrim, who had been told by Pam several days before, that he was unfortunately unable to attend that function, was shocked by the news, she had not betrayed her feelings to the other servant.

"So 'e's coming! Very nice for 'er ladyship, isn't it?" she answered conventionally.

"Oh, very! 'Er ladyship is going to look a *dream*, too. 'Er gownd is by Worth, my dear, and perfectly sweet."

"She is very beautiful," Pilgrim agreed.

"Isn't she! And good, too, Miss Pilgrim! Them beauties is mostly *hawful* to serve, but 'er ladyship is as kind as if she was 'ideous. Much too good for '*im*, is my opinion, if you ask it!"

Pilgrim had not asked it, but it was none the less acceptable to her. "A very pleasant gentleman, 'e seems; 'e was 'ere once before and we liked 'im," she answered.

"Did you? Well, it's not for me to say, but when a lady 'as the 'eadache as often as 'er ladyship, and cries 'er eyes out every few days, it isn't *me* as says 'er gentleman is good enough for her. And not even a baronet!"

Poor Pilgrim was a very honest woman, and the natural bent of her character was towards a somewhat grim and unattractive straightforwardness, but on this occasion she had tampered with the Lady Henrietta's communicative maid, and had learned many things that made her uneasier and more anxious than before.

She had not told Pam that Peele was, in spite of his original intention to the contrary, coming to the wedding in obedience to a telegraphic summons from his *fiancée* sent the day before. It would, she felt, be better to tell

Pam, but somehow she had been unable to approach the subject with the girl, though she was sure that Pam did not know. And in this she was right. Peele's coming down to Sir Henry Pockington's had been duly communicated to Mrs. Maxse, but in the excitement and hurry usual at such times, the news had elicited no comment, and Pam had not heard it.

She did not see Peele until, when the marriage ceremony was nearly over, she raised her eyes to find his fixed on her. For a moment she met his gaze, and then turned again to the bevy of girls at the altar-rails. It seemed, his presence, very much to have been expected, and quite appropriate to the curious chain of events, that had led to the present situation. The Duchess's confidence had thrown the girl back into the confusion and trouble from which her perceptions of Peele's real need of her had raised her; if he needed her, Lady Henrietta seemed to need him quite as badly, and it is not pleasant to be confided in by a person you are contemplating injuring.

The Duchess's confirmation of the girl's own impression that Peele was making his future wife unhappy, had again roused in her the curious resentment she had felt towards him the evening of the dinner at the hotel. She had not slept, and all night long the combinations possible as an end of the chapter she had come to in her life, passed before her eyes. Peele might marry Lady Henrietta—that was the first possibility. And that granted, he might forget Pam and make his wife happy, or he might remember and want Pam, and ruin Lady Henrietta's life.

The second possibility was that he should break his engagement. This hypothesis accepted, the girl's mind went on to picture him either as her own husband or her lover.

If she married him, as he wished, he would be happy unless the comparative poverty that would be the result of such a marriage, and the loss of prestige occasioned by his jilting of the Duke of Wight's sister, should hurt his love for her. He had admitted that the close relations to several powerful men, into which his marriage with the Lady Henrietta would bring him, would be of the utmost importance to his career, and instinctively the girl felt that his ambition, were she herself not almost more ambitious for him, would be her only, but dangerous, rival.

If, then, he did not marry her, but, breaking his engagement, allowed her to follow out her own plan of going to him as his mistress, it would, as she believed, assure their love to each other for ever.

As she reached for the hundredth time, this point in her reflections, the organ burst out into the recessional, and Sir George and Lady Chesney, followed by the bridesmaids, passed into the vestry.

Pam and Ratty, among others, followed them, and a few moments later the road between the church and the house was bright with gaily attired women and their sober-hued attendants. Ratty, whose was the misfortune of looking his very best in his oldest clothes, placed himself at Pam's side and stuck there with sullen persistence all the way, although several men tried to oust him from his position.

"Hang 'em all," the fat youth muttered, "why don't they go and talk to their *own* cousins?"

"Why don't you ask them?" she suggested carelessly. "*Don't* step on Mrs. Baring's gown again!"

"Look here, Pam, I'd like to *kick* that chap Liddesleigh!"

"Why? He's harmless enough surely!"

"Then what does he mean by staring at you all through the service?"

"Did he stare at me? And what if he did?"

"You *know* he did! And I believe you like it."

She turned and looked at his red, angry face, as they crossed the lawn. "Look here, Ratty, don't be idiotic, please."

"Idiotic! Is a man idiotic because he is in——"

"Some men are," she returned coolly, "and all *boys*. If you propose to me again, I'll tell grandfather. I give you my word I will!"

Ratty subsided at this threat, into sulky silence, and a few minutes later Pam came down from Maxse's room after having given the invalid a brief description of events, and went into the library where her grandfather, the victim, since the day before of a sharp attack of his old enemy, was installed in his wheel-chair.

"It's done, G. F.," she exclaimed gaily, kissing him. "Evelyn Maxse is dead; long live Lady Chesney!"

The old man looked at her keenly. "So Peele came down after all," he said.

"Yes. Ratty says the Duchess told Aunt Rosamund yesterday, but I didn't know, either. I looked up during the service, and there he was, sweetly squeezed in between the Duchess and Lady Henrietta. He looks very ill, by the way."

"Humph!" Lord Yeoland rubbed his nose, and, after a pause, went on: "Here's a list I've made. If you let any of these people get in here, I'll shoot 'em in their tracks. Mind you look out, now!"

The young girl took the slip of paper and left the room, frowning thoughtfully. She was very quick at feeling other people's moods, and she knew that something connected with James Peele had disturbed her grandfather.

In the hall, she met the Lady Henrietta and Peele, and stood quite still as they approached, an involuntary tribute to the wonderful beauty of the woman in the shimmering silver-coloured gown.

"How do you do, Miss Pam?" Peele shook hands with her and then asked for news of her grandfather.

"He is not very well; he has the gout horribly, poor dear, isn't it a pity?"

"It is indeed."

The Lady Henrietta patted her arm as Peele spoke, and after a short pause, said kindly, "You look ill, Pam, what is it, a headache?"

"No. I am troubled about something—I slept badly."

"You are young to be troubled, dear. Perhaps we can help you, when the people have gone and we can be quiet."

Pam shook her head. "No, you can't," she said almost ungraciously. "No one can, but I'll be all right."

As she spoke she noticed a telegram that Peele had in his hand. "Is that for me?" she added, surprised.

"Yes. I found a servant looking for you," returned the Lady Henrietta, "and I said I'd give it to you."

The young girl opened the message, which was very long and read it slowly, a slow flush creeping up her face.

"Pam, Pam!" The Lady Henrietta shook her finger playfully at the girl as she spoke. "I never saw you blush before!"

"I—it is something very good and kind. I—I must go, Lady Henrietta." Turning she ran swiftly up the shallow oaken stairs. When she had reached her room and bolted the door, she sat down and re-read the telegram.

"Have seen R.," it said, "and will not trouble you again. Am staying on here as long as she needs me, and if I can be of use to you in any way wire me Langham, and I will come. I promise not to say a word to you about myself. For God's sake do nothing about P. without telling your grandfather. God bless you and as long as I live I am at your disposition. Permanent address, New Colonial Bank, Melbourne. Charnley Burke."

For a long time the girl sat musing. He was very good, Charnley Burke, and very unselfish, and his love for her was strong and sincere. It was a pity that she had not fallen in love with him!

At last putting the telegram in her pocket, she went down stairs again.

CHAPTER IV

EVELYN, sitting in a low chair in the skirt of her wedding gown, while her maid changed her satin shoes for a very smart pair of patent leather boots, wept softly, dabbing her eyes with her handkerchief which she had rolled into a ball.

Pam, standing by the dressing-table, very erect, her hands behind her, looked on in stern disapproval.

"Your howling in this way is a charming tribute to your husband," she observed drily, in French.

Evelyn sniffed. "I know it; it's awful, but I can't help it. I'm so nervous I could die."

The bride's French brought a faint smile to her cousin's mouth, but that critical person only nodded. "Want some orange-flower water? I'll get you some of Uncle Dick's," she asked in English after a pause.

"No thanks. Pam, is my nose red?"

"Red as a beet. Really, Evy, I'd be *raging* if I were Sir George. Why are you crying?"

Evelyn rose suddenly, unhooked her skirt, stepped out of it, and kicking it aside with an indifference that alarmed Pam, said to her maid, "You may go, Harkness, and when I want you, I'll ring. Pam," she went on hurriedly, as the door closed, "Mamma will be coming in a minute, and I *must* tell you first. Look here, and you'll see why I cry."

Opening a drawer of her writing-table, she took out a book and a letter and handed them to the now thoroughly alarmed Pam.

"A Bible! My dear Evy, you aren't crying about a Bible!" But her jocular tone failed her as she glanced at the open letter.

"My dear Evelyn,—I am sending you a Bible as a wedding gift. Please let it be the one you use. And now writing you for the last time, I can only repeat what you know, that I shall never forget you and never love any one else. You have made your choice, and I pray that you may be happy. You will at least have all the comforts to which you are used. I am going to Africa with the Bishop of Natal. I may be able to do some good there.

"Good-bye again, and God bless you.

"Cecil Morecambe."

Pam read the letter twice and then looked up with a frown at which the bride trembled.

"You have been writing each other all the time," she said sternly.

"Oh, Pam, I couldn't help it. I—I love, I mean, I loved him so."

"How did you get his letters?"

"He used to send them to Mary Kirke."

"Mary Kirke! Well, and so you have been having a—a love-correspondence while you were engaged. I must say, Evelyn, I am ashamed of you. There is nothing so loathesome as a sneak! And now—you are Lady Chesney!"

"You have no right to call me a sneak, Pam Yedland."

"Yes, I have, because you are one. And a coward, or you would not have given Cecil up, just because he was poor. *Bah!* how he must despise you!"

Evelyn sank into the chair at her dressing-table and wept, with an utter disregard for her nose which Pam's practical mind at once observed.

"Now, stop crying," she said, giving her flaccid cousin an energetic shake. "You'll look like a boiled lobster if you don't. Come, here's camphor; smell it *hard*, never mind if it *does* burn. I'll get hot water, and rose-water. And I'm going to burn this letter of Cecil's, and you must just try and forget all about him; it's all you can do now."

A few minutes later the bride, with a scrap of old batiste soaked in rose water tenderly wrapped about her nose, sat with downcast but dry eyes before her glass, while

Pam's deft hands braided and arranged her hair for the last time.

"You see, Evy, I told you long ago, when he first proposed, that it would be as easy as rolling off a log, to just tell grandfather that you *would* marry him. And I told him—Cecil—that, too."

"You tell everybody things, Pam," returned Evy with a movement of not inexcusable resentment. "You always *did* think you could do everything. Just wait until *you* get into a muddle, and see how easy it is to get out of it!"

Pam's hands faltered for a moment in their work among the speaker's honey-coloured tresses, and then with a peculiar little smile, she answered gaily, "I know, Evy, you poor thing, I am horribly arbitrary, but then you see when I can see my way one bit, I never hesitate—*never*."

"I suppose you think I saw my way with Cecil writing frantic letters to me, and Sir George—I mean *George*—getting engaged to me almost before I knew it!"

Pam bent down and kissed her hot cheek, in a sudden impulse of pity. "Poor Evy! I'm sorry I was so cross, dear, but you know what a fiend of a temper I have. There! Your hair's perfect; look at it sideways. I'l ring for Harkness now and go down. Grandfather told me not to desert him. All the Horrors have found him ou in the Red Room and he's having an awful time!"

As she went downstairs she met her aunt ascending.

"Your grandfather wants you, Pam," Mrs. Maxse said "and your uncle too."

"All right, Aunt Rosamund; I'll go to grandfathe first, and then I'll come to Uncle Dick. Don't let Ev cry again, or Sir George will refuse to take her!"

Lord Yealand's pleasant little plan of seeing, in hi retreat, only those people who did not bore him, had o course been foiled, and when Pam entered the Red Roon she found him struggling in a bog of conversation with th wife of a neighbouring squire who, being deeply intereste in bees, took for granted in all others a similar love fo those irritatingly exemplar little creatures, and who ha for the last quarter of an hour been discoursing to th old gentleman on the merits of her own pet hives, and the glaring defects of all others.

"Eh, Pam, my dear," Lord Yeoland exclaimed with that enthusiastic cordiality with which one greets one's rescuer from a bore, "you know Mrs. Bevis, I think? She has been telling me the most *enchanting* things about her bees."

"Indeed! How delightful. But you mustn't be selfish, grandfather, and keep Mrs. Bevis all to yourself. Have you seen the roses?" she added, turning to the good lady with a sweetness that brought an instantly repressed grin to Lord Yeoland's face.

A moment later Mrs. Bevis had buttonholed the Marquis, and was shouting into his better ear a few polite questions about his health, which cunningly led the way to apiculture, and Pam had escaped.

She stood for a few minutes on the lawn, sighing with relief, her face relaxed into troubled lines, her brows drawn together.

"'Just wait until I get into a muddle,'" she said aloud, quoting Evelyn's words to her with a short laugh. "A muddle!" Catching sight, as she spoke, of the Duchess at one of the drawing-room windows, the young girl turned, and crossing the lawn, went into the ruin and ran up the stairs to the top of the tower. The block of wood whose failure as a foothold had forced her to be present at Peele's proposal to the Lady Henrietta the year before, was still there, and sitting down on it, the girl rested her chin on her hands, and tried to think.

It was hard for her to force her thoughts into any definite channel, for they were wide-spread and disconnected, undecided and confused.

Peele's presence had been a shock to her, the more so because of the Duchess's interrupted confidence on the evening before. As she had told Evelyn, whenever she could see her way she had no hesitation about boldly taking it, regardless of possible or inevitable results, but here she could see no way.

Everything seemed, since she has decided that Peele's future depended more or less on her, once more a whirl of indecision, for the Lady Henrietta had again come into the foreground, and her rights loomed before the girl's eyes.

Peele had come, the Lady Henrietta had unobtrusively assumed a right of ownership over him, and Arcadia seemed, at best, only a dream.

To Pam's impatient mind nothing was so maddening as this indecision. "If I could only decide what to do," she told herself with a frown, "I could do it if it killed me, but the more I think the less I can tell what would be best for him. And after all, I may be just a vain fool to imagine that he cares that much for me. He might forget all about me in six months, and *she* could help me in a thousand ways. And she is beautiful, and good, and kind, and I am brown and ugly and—illegitimate. Or perhaps I'm not that any more, since father and mother are married."

As she arrived at this irrevelevant point in her musings, her quick ear caught the sound of footsteps in the ruin and she sat up listening. She knew, before he appeared in the stairway that it was Peele, and that he had followed her.

"Well!" he said coming towards her.

"Well?" She did not move as she looked up with a nod. "You look very smart in that coat."

"Do I? I'm glad. Pam, what are you doing here?"

"Sitting on a block of wood and—glowering."

"I can see that much. I saw you coming, and—I came too."

"I can see that much. What do you want?"

Peele leaned against the parapet and folding his arms smiled at her. "You are in [illegible] bad temper, aren't you?" he asked.

"Yes. I am in a devilish temper. I wish you'd go away and leave me."

"Do you really, Pam?"

She met his eyes, steadily. "Yes. Why did you come to the wedding at all? I saw your 'regrets' myself."

"Henrietta wired me."

"Oh. Well, I *didn't* wire you.'

"Pam, stand up."

"Thanks, I am very comfortable."

"Stand up, I say." He spoke very quietly, but, l out of curiosity, she obeyed him.

Then he took her hands and looked into her eyes.

"Will you marry me?"

"I told you *there* that I would not."

"That was in Arcadia. This is life and it has to l faced."

There was a long pause, during which she made such a effort to stop feeling and to begin to think, that she gre very pale.

"Pam, will you marry me?"

"If I said yes," she faltered, "what would you say t Henrietta?"

"I should tell her the truth, and ask her forgiveness I have done nothing but think about it, and it's the onl way. *Dear*!"

His eyes were full of tears as he spoke, and the tears so softened and changed his face that she longed to pull his head to her breast and comfort him as a mother does her child. Then he said her name, very softly, "Pam," and "the way" she had been seeking opened before her. He needed her so much that all her objections and her perplexities shrunk to nothingness. She must become his wife.

With a great heart throb she was about to answer him, when something broke the encompassing quiet. "Jim! Jim, are you here?"

It was Henrietta Shanklin's voice in the refectory below. "*Jim!*"

Pam drew her hands from Peele and putting them behind her, whispered the one word, "go."

"I cannot. *You must* marry me."

"I will not: Never. Go."

"You have no right to chop and change like this. You must marry me!"

"Jim, are you there?" called the other woman from below. Pam looked straight at him. "I have been a fool to waver; I always knew that you must keep your promise to her. Go."

And without a word, he left her.

"I saw you sneaking away by yourself, you unsociable creature," his *fiancée* called as he reached the ground, "and I rather hoped you might be here. Jim, how pale you are! What is it? You are not ill again?"

Pam listened eagerly, leaning against the parapet where he had leaned.

"Ill? Of course I'm not. I saw that bee-woman searching for another victim, and I bolted, that's all. What a lovely old place this is."

"Yes. Do you remember, Jim?" Her voice was suddenly very tender, and Pam gave a forced nod of approval as she listened.

"If he isn't nice to her, I'll *kill* him," the girl thought, hugging the thorn to her breast.

Then, suddenly, she drew a quick breath and closed her eyes.

"Henny," Peele was saying, very distinctly, "I am sailing for South Africa four weeks from to-day, with Miller. Will you marry me before I go?"

Pam heard no answer, but she knew that the Lady Henrietta was crying in Peele's arms.

CHAPTER V

Two hours later Pam knocked at Lord Yeoland's door.

"Grandfather, I have come to ask a favour of you!"

The old man looked up from the fire he had every evening, even in the spring days.

"A favour? You have only to ask, Pam."

The young girl came to the fire and sat down, her white dressing-gown falling gracefully about her, and tinged with pink by the dancing flames.

"May I wear my Grandmother's emeralds to-night?"

"Your Grandmother's emeralds! What in the name of all that's irrelevant has put them into your head, my dear?"

"I don't know, but I should love to wear them. It isn't," she added, "as if they were cut, you know. Lots of people will think they are chrysoprase."

"That's true. Well, yes, I see no reason why you should not wear them. Is there any particular reason why you should?"

Pam drew one of her long plaits thoughtfully through her hands.

"Yes, G. F., dear, there is a reason. You see, Pam is looking very pale to-night, and dreadfully like Cally, and as she is to go to her first ball, she wants to look well."

"The emeralds will be very unbecoming, if you are pale."

"Yes. They will make me paler, but people will think that it *is* they that make me pale, do you see?"

"I see. And it will not be the emeralds?"

"No, Grandfather."

"I wonder," the old man leaned over and laid his hand on her shoulder as he spoke, "I wonder, Pam, whether you had not better tell me what it is?"

She did not answer, and he went on, a little wistfully, "I don't want to force your confidence, my dear, but we have always been good friends."

"Grandfather," she returned, looking at him, "it is this. Mr. Peele asked me to marry him this afternoon, and I refused."

"Peele!" She did not notice that the old man expressed no surprise.

"Yes."

There was a long pause, and then Pam added quietly, "That's why. May I have the emeralds?"

"You may have all the emeralds if you want 'em. Or perhaps—perhaps you'd rather have the diamonds, my dear?"

The girl rose, and burst into a merry laugh. "Oh, Grandfather, what a lamb you are! No, thank you, dearest old man, I don't want the diamonds, and I'm glad I told you, but we won't say any more about it."

"No," returned Lord Yeoland promptly, "not a word."

Pam held out her hand, grateful for his forbearance, and they shook hands gravely, as two men might have done. Then she flung the tail of her gown over her arm and went to the door. "Will you send them up to my room? Or shall Pilly fetch them?"

"Pilgrim had better fetch them, my dear."

When he was alone, Lord Yeoland sat for a long time staring at the fire. He had asked no questions and made no protest, but Pam's confirmation of the story he had heard that morning had made him sad. His plans for the girl had been many, and he now knew instinctively that they had come to naught.

It had been quite out of his reckoning that the girl should fall in love with a man she couldn't marry, but even if he had been unprovided with data on the subject, one look at her white face would have been sufficient to convince him that she did love Peele.

When Pilgrim came in for the jewels, which the old man had had brought to him, she found him still brooding over the fire.

"You were right, Jane," he said, without looking up, "she has told me herself."

"Oh, my Lord, told you herself! My poor Pam, my child, my dearie!"

"Yes. But you were wrong, as I told you, about Mr. —about the gentleman in question. He asked her to marry him and she refused. That was all."

Pilgrim clasped her hands and gave a sort of groan of relief. "Thank God, my Lord, thank God! I am an old fool, your Lordship, ever to think anything else was possible, but I 'ave seen 'ow we were looked *askant* at always, and I've 'eard talk among the servants, and then, at Torpington, she a-goin' in 'er hinnocence to 'is very 'ouse every day! An' 'er Ladyship's maid talking about the engagement——"

The poor woman's voice broke and she pressed one bony hand hard to her mouth to hide its trembling.

Lord Yeoland looked at her kindly. "Well, well, my good creature," he said after a pause, and holding up a slender gold fillet on which gleamed a great pear-shaped *cabochon* emerald, "take this up to her, and this case, and just tell her, will you, that she is to—to keep them."

"Oh, my Lord! 'Ow glad she will be! Thank you, my Lord, that is, I 'ave no business to thank your Lordship, but——"

The old man waved his hand at her in gentle impatience. "There, there Jane, that will do, I quite understand. And I wish to tell you that I appreciate all your love for and care of my grand-daughter. I—I shall provide for your old age. Now please go," he added hastily, pointing to the door, "I don't wish for any thanks; you are a faithful servant and friend and I shall provide for you. Just ring for my man, will you?"

Pilgrim rushed from the room, to burst into tears in the hall, so that when she went to Pam, that young lady turned from her with a gesture of despair. "Great heavens, Pilly, you have been crying and your nose is as red as Evelyn's was! I seem to be haunted by fiery-eyed, glossy-faced weeping-willows to-day! Ah, you have them. Give them to me."

She had arranged her hair something in the way the Parisian hairdresser had tried to teach Pilgrim, parted and rolled back into a soft knot on the nape of her neck; it looked, for some reason, lighter, done this way; and the waves over her ears were shot with coppery red.

"This emerald is so big no one will believe it's real," she observed, settling the fillet firmly on her head and securing it. "Makes me pale, too, doesn't it?" she added, watching the maid's swollen face in the glass.

"You are pale anyway to-night, Pam," Pilgrim answered, laying one hand on the girl's bare shoulder with unwonted tenderness.

"Am I? Hard luck, at my first ball, isn't it? However, I am never pretty, so it doesn't much matter."

"Never pretty! you aren't a wax doll, like some, if that's what you mean."

"It is. Exactly what I mean. Has my bouquet come up?"

"It's here, I'm just opening the paper. Oh, Pam, Miss Pam, I mean, whatever possessed you to order them nasty snaky things!"

The despised flowers were exquisite pale-green orchids splashed with velvety brown and white streaks.

Pam laughed. "You goose, it took half an hour's coaxing, and an order from Grandfather to get them out of McWhirter! They are his very finest orchids!"

"But they are green, and you will look like a ghost!"

"Silly Billy! I shall be a dream of beauty. Now hurry up and dress me, or I'll be late for dinner!"

Half an hour later, the young girl knocked at the Duchess's door, and went into the room where Her Grace was deep in the mysteries of the toilet of the young-looking woman of sixty-five.

Several red curls lay on the dressing-table, and rouge pots and powder-boxes yawned boldly in the electric lights, but the Duchess was quite unconcerned over the exposure.

"How d'ye do, my dear," she said sociably, powdering her nose. "What a beautiful frock. Just go into the other room for a minute, will you," she added to her maid, going on as the door closed, "she'll glue her ear to the keyhole, but never mind. One has to pretend to a certain reserve. Pam, I have news for you!"

"Have you?" Pam looked at her with brave eyes, but her hands trembled as she smoothed her gloves.

"Yes. About Henny. They are to be married in three weeks! What do you think of that?"

"I am very glad."

"And so am I! Henny is a queer mortal, not a bit like me, and I am always tempted to tease her, but I am glad. I think Jim may be happier too, when they are once married. He is going out in Albert Miller's Commission the week after the wedding, but that can't be helped."

Pam stared. "But she will go with him!"

"Henny? To South Africa? Not she, my dear. She is a wretched sailor, and can't stand roughing it at all. She will stay at home and get the house ready. They are to have my house in Berkeley Square. The time will pass quickly enough, particularly as they are to have new plumbing put in. How's my complexion?"

Pam examined her critically. "I'd rub off a bit under your right eye. Yes, that's better; well, I'll go down and not bother you. I am *very* glad, Duchess."

The dressing-room was empty when she entered it, but a moment later Sir Henry Pockington and Peele came in.

"My uncle was a little worse this evening, Sir Henry," Pam explained, shaking hands with him, "so my aunt is late. How do you do, Mr. Peele?"

"How do you do, Miss Yeoland?"

Sir Henry, of whom Pam had always been rather a pet, looked at her admiringly. "Well, Miss Pam, I suppose you will allow me to observe that you are looking lovely. Lovely, by Jove!"

"I am glad you think so. My maid told me the emeralds and orchids made me too pale," she returned with civil carelessness.

"Not a bit, not a bit. I hate your apple-faced women, don't you, Peele?"

"I do indeed."

"And I must say," Sir Henry went on, putting on his rimless pince-nez and looking down at the top of the girl's head, "that I never saw such hair in my life!"

Pam laughed. "Here comes Aunt Rosamund," she said, "and it is time she did. Sir Henry is spoiling me most dreadfully, Aunt Rosamund."

Mrs. Maxse, plainer than ever in her stone-coloured satin gown, her eyes swollen with tears, laughed nervously.

"Ah, Mr. Peele," she cried, shaking hands with the elder man, "my father has just told me the news. How delightful it is!"

Pam passed her arm affectionately through that of the poor woman who had lost her only comfort. "*Doesn't* she look as though weddings delighted her?" the girl asked gently, "poor Aunt Rosamund, just think how soon she will be back!"

Then, as more guests arrived, she went to the window near which Peele was standing, looking out into the rose-garden, and held out her hand to him.

"I hope you will be very happy," she said simply.

"Thanks." He did not take her hand, nor did he look at her as he spoke.

"You are not angry with me?"

He turned, his face expressionless. "Angry?" he repeated coldly, "certainly not. Why should I be angry; you are a very wise woman; anything else would have been pitiable folly."

Passing her, he sauntered through the open window, and a moment later, as she stood talking to the Lady Henrietta, he came back, carefully breaking the thorn off a rose he had picked, and then putting it in his coat.

CHAPTER VI

To Lord Yeoland's unspeakable and unspoken relief, Pam did not recur to the subject of Peele, nor did she visibly pine. The change in her was so slight as to be unnoticed by every one except her Grandfather and Pilgrim, and to comfort them at first by the thought that she possibly did not much care, after all.

Pilgrim, indeed, had, in her satisfaction on hearing of Peele's proposal, for a time considered everything to be in order, for according to the good woman's simple ethics, if Pam had wanted Peele, she'd have taken him. But the maid's eyes were sharper than those of many mothers, and several small signs observed by her combined little by little to teach her that bravely as she hid it, Pam had had a serious blow, and still suffered under it.

The girl lay awake at night instead of sleeping, and her eyes, more like the monkey's than ever, were heavy. She was very cheerful, reading aloud to Dick Maxse, who was a little better, playing cards with him, and trying in a boyish way that was not without a shade of pathos, to do for her aunt various little things that had always fallen to Evelyn's share.

Every morning she read the *Times* to her grandfather, and he once saw how, after reading with unfaltering voice a letter on the South African Commission in which much was said of James Peele, every bit of colour left her face.

The old man shook his head as she went on to the next article; it was, after all, then, as serious as he had at first thought, but he did not speak of it.

A week had passed, after the wedding, and Ratty had gone back to Oxford, after a final interview with his cousin in which his attitude had been one of despair mixed with patronage, and hers one of rather unusual patience.

"I am sorry, Ratty," she said, at parting, "but as I couldn't ever marry you under any consideration whatever, I really think you'd better stop thinking of it."

"Just like a girl. You always were an idiot, Pam," returned the swain, sending a shower of gravel over the lawn with a savage kick, "as if I *could* stop thinking of it."

The girl laughed. "Then try to remember how you always despised me, that ought to be a comfort. Think what an idiot I am and always was; how thin I am; how much I look like Cally; you surely, in your sane moments, don't want a wife who looks like *that*, do you?"

Caliban, who came hirpling along over the grass towards her, after a short voyage of discovery in the shrubbery, muttering with many grimaces, in the usual disillusion of explorers, was certainly not attractive, and Ratty, burying his hands in his trousers pockets, burst into reluctant laughter.

"You are a wonder, Pam! I declare, I don't believe there's another like you on the face of the earth. There are a dozen girls even in this dead-and-alive neighbourhood who are a thousand times prettier than you, and who can play, or paint, and all that, while you can't do a thing, and yet, a fellow can't get you out of his head!"

Pam looked up suddenly from her occupation of stroking Caliban, her eyes alight with interest. "Really, Ratty? Do you honestly think that—that 'a fellow can't get me out of his head?' I mean, that I should be hard to forget altogether?"

Ratty shrugged his shoulders, a trick he had learned from the girl herself. "If you are thinking of Lassels," he returned with sullen malice, "I don't think that his attentions at the ball meant much. I'm a fool about you, sometimes, but Lassels is going to be the Marquis of Budcombe, my good girl, you must remember."

She raised her eye-brows, looking at him with a gentle scorn that made him uncomfortable. "Try not to be a cad, Ratty," she said quietly, holding out her hand. "The dog-cart is there, and Aunt Rosamund looking for you. Good-bye."

Thus, the household diminished by two, the week passed.

Dick Maxse, much afflicted by the fact that his wife, bereft of her daughter, now devoted more of her time to him than ever before, sought distraction in a mild flirtation with one of his nurses, a pretty young woman from St. Thomas's; Lord Yeoland had two bad days, and was better again; Pam took long walks in the late afternoons and passed the rest of her time with one or the other of her relatives; Pilgrim studied her *Mistress* with a humble zeal that sat oddly on her gaunt face.

One day Pam and Maxse had what the suffering ne'er-do-weel call a "naked-soul talk."

"But Miss Perry is pretty," he protested innocently, in reply to a vigorous expostulation from the girl.

"Of course she is pretty, but—oh well, Uncle Dick, for a man who says he is going to live only six months, you really are pretty horrid."

"Why am I horrid ?" he persisted with one of his old graceless grins. "What on earth do I do ?"

"Well, couldn't you possibly take your drops without kissing her hand ?"

Pam, very erect in a high-backed chair, Caliban in her arms, looked at him seriously as she spoke, and he turned a little so that he could see her at his ease.

"Without kissing her hand ? Well yes, if you put it in that way, I suppose I could, but then, why should I ?"

"Don't you think it would be more dignified ?"

He burst out laughing. "Dignified ! My dear Amelia, can you imagine, in your wildest flights of imagination, Richard Allison Joyce Maxse, being dignified ?"

"I can imagine him trying," she answered drily.

"Then you can do more than I can, my dear. Why look here, Pam, I'll be as dead as Queen Anne in six months' time, and they'll arrange me nicely in a coffin, with flowers and all that, and then what will happen ? The 'dignity of death,' as poets say, will turn away from me, and there won't be one bit of 'majesty' or 'peace' or any other of the usual nice things about me; I'll look just as I do now when I'm asleep—like a poor devil who has had his day.

and done all those things he ought not to have done. And to go back to Miss Perry (first name Daisy)," he resumed, with unabashed cheeriness, "I've kissed her hand for a week now, and I couldn't stop or it would hurt her feelings."

Pam rose. "Well, at least be careful not to hurt Aunt Rosamund's feelings; let her have some nice things to remember about you."

"'Sweet as remembered kisses, after death,'" he chuckled, as she left the room.

On her way downstairs she met a servant with some letters for her, and going into the library sat down by an open window and read them.

The first was a short note from her mother, written from St. Jean de Luz, and containing the news that she and Sacheverel were thinking of going to Japan in a yacht with some friends.

Pam gave a short laugh, which was not mirthful, and took up her second letter, which was from the Duchess:

"DEAR PAM,—Thanks so much for sending my slippers. That creature forgets everything. I am a wreck, and no rouge can hide the ravages made by fatigue in flying about getting Henrietta's things. The wedding, of course, is to be very quiet, but I want you to come, and to stay with me until it is over. Will you? It is quite improper of me to want you, you know, I ought to ask Maria's Alice, but the child bites her nails and drives me mad, whereas you and I always agree. You may bring your suite, 'Pilly and Cally,' with you, and we'll do some theatres incog. if you like. Now don't rush off and visit some person in Derbyshire this time, please, or I'll never speak to you again. My love to your Grandfather and tell him that I will take good care of you.

"Yours affectionately,

"ELIZA WIGHT."

Pam read this letter twice, and then opened the last, which was from Burke:

"DEAR PAM,—Madame Ravaglia is dead, and I write to tell you, as she asked me to do. I have been a good deal with her of late, and you will be glad to hear that towards the last she did not suffer at all. Last night I was there when the priest came and gave her extreme unction. She seemed glad to take communion, and told me that she was not afraid to die. I am feeling rather badly about it, for she was a good friend to me, and at my age one doesn't easily make friends. Thanks for your letter. I am glad my telegram relieved your mind. Of course I shall never trouble you again, and I hope with all my heart that you may be happy. She did not tell me who the man is, and I took it for granted it must be Peele, until I saw in a paper this morning the announcement of the day of his marriage with some one else. Whoever he may be I hope you will be happy, and my telegram holds good. The sale of poor Madame Ravaglia's things is going on, and there will be a good deal of money, all of which goes to the Church, I believe. She left her rings to you, did you know?

"Good-bye, then; if you knew how I love you you would be sorry for me. Remember, always, that if you ever want me I will come, no matter where I am. You know my banker's address.

"CHARNLEY BURKE."

The letter was badly written as well as awkwardly expressed, and as Burke, as a rule, was voluble enough, she knew what his nervousness meant. And Ravaglia was dead. It was not a shock, but it was an added loneliness.

A few minutes later, the girl went out on to the terrace, where her Grandfather sat near the spot where he had first received her, years ago.

"Grandfather," she began abruptly, "I want you to do something for me. Not a jewel this time; worse; I mean harder for you."

"What is it, Pam?"

"The Duchess wants me to go to the wedding, and to stay with her afterwards. Of course I can't, and so I want you to be ill, and need a change of air, and go away with me, somewhere too far for me to go to town. Will you?"

"Of course I will, my dear. We'll go to the sea or somewhere. To Cornwall, for instance."

"You are very good to me, Grandfather."

"I want to be, Pam. So that's settled. I'll be worse in the night, and to-morrow I'll make Harris send me to Cornwall."

Pam went close to him and laid one hand on his shoulder, while her face was turned towards the terrace below. "Just there it was," she said slowly, her voice deepening, "that I came up the path, years ago, with poor old Cally in my arms. I remember it very well. You said, 'how do you do, my dear, I am very glad to see you.'"

"Yes, and then, a moment later, you informed me that you were at the ugly age," he answered lightly, for something in her voice made him sad.

"You were very good to me, Grandfather, from the first," she went on, taking no notice of his interruption, "and you have always been good. I have never tried to thank you, and I have not been very good to you."

"There is no need of thanks, my dear, and the only thing I have against you is that you did not always stay with me. You have made my life much pleasanter than it could have been without you, Pam."

"Have I, Grandfather?"

"Yes."

"Then you will let me stay always, won't you?" she asked, turning at last, and looking at him with moist eyes that suddenly reminded him that he had never seen her cry.

"Let you stay? I will not let you go, Pam; neither to the Duchess nor to any one else."

"No one else wants me," she said with a smile. Then very quickly she stooped, kissed him, and was off like an arrow, speeding down the path until she was lost to view at a turning among the trees.

Lord Yeoland's eyes were wet as she disappeared. "Damn that fellow," he said aloud.

CHAPTER VII

Two days later Lord Yealand, Pam, Pilgrim, Jenkins, the valet, and Caliban, were settled in an hotel on the Cornish coast not far from Penzance. It was a delightful spot, surrounded by beautiful drives, and the air was full of the music of the waves as they boomed on the great rocks below.

"An excellent place for an invalid, Pam?" the old man asked solemnly while his servant settled him in a sheltered corner of the garden the day after their arrival. "I declare I feel better already. You must write and tell your aunt the good news." Pam nodded, as her grandfather winked over the back of Jenkins as that functionary tucked the plaid carefully about his master's legs, and rose, with a pleased glance at the wicked old gentleman's beaming face.

The old man had thoroughly entered into the spirit of the little comedy. In the night following his talk with Pam on the terrace, he had had a mysterious seizure involving numerous perplexingly irreconcileable symptoms, and all the next day new ones had developed. "I can't explain," he said irritably to the doctor, who was feeling his pulse for the twentieth time. "It was a tremendous flutter, and a sharp pain, and then I think I fainted. Didn't I faint, Jenkins?"

"Nearly, M'Lud. The brandy just saved your Lordship from quite going off," returned the faithful servant, who had a turn for dramatic narration. "His Lordship's lips was blue as indigo, sir," he added to the doctor, "and 'is 'ands like ice. 'Is Lordship 'ad 'orrible pain in 'is stummick too, afterwards, and electric shocks in 'is spinal cord. 'Jenkins,' 'is Lordship said to me, 'it's my spinal cord, sure.'"

"Oh yes, spinal cord *very* bad, Harris," the old man added, winking at Pam, past Mrs. Maxse who stood with anxiously fluttering hands by the bed.

Harris, who was a rather clever man, nodded without speaking. Knowing that Lord Yeoland's heart, spinal cord, and temperature were in as good order as usual, he was not alarmed, but chronic gout may show itself in many ways, and he had no reason for suspecting his patient of malingering.

Cornwall being suggested by the invalid himself, the doctor agreed at once. Sea air *might* do gout good; that nothing else did was certain, and as Cornwall seemed to be the remedy for which Lord Yeoland yearned, to Cornwall he was sent.

Mr. Maxse earnestly urged his father-in-law to take one of his nurses (not Miss Perry) with him, but the old man rebelled at this idea, protesting that Jenkins understood him better than any strange woman could, so Jenkins, very proud of his charge, and armed with divers bottles against a renewal of his Lordship's strange attack, assumed his new honours.

"I wonder," Lord Yeoland remarked thoughtfully, when the servant had left him alone with Pam "whether Pilgrim is worried about me?"

"I think, between you and me," the girl returned, with a laugh, "that Pilgrim strongly suspects you of being a fraud, G. F."

"I agree with you. There is suspicion in her eye. And a cold fishy eye it is, too. Pilgrim is excellent, Pam, but she is not an irresistible woman."

"Poor Pilly! No, she is not. Just look at that fuchsia, isn't it exquisite? I suppose all the bells ring at midnight, and make the most lovely music!"

"It's a beautiful place, Pam. Your friend Ravaglia used to have a house near here, by the way, poor soul!"

"Did she? Where?"

"I don't know exactly, but in this neighbourhood somewhere."

There was a long pause, and then Pam said suddenly, "G. F., tell me about her, won't you? She told me once that somebody would tell me her story some day, and I'd like to hear it."

"Her story! Poor soul, she had dozens," answered the old man, picking a rose from the wall near him, and sniffing at it.

"But her real one? Every one must have a *real* story."

"Well, yes. Years ago, when she was living with her husband, a little snuffy *avvocato* in Sicily, she did something wrong. Then she ran away from her husband, and from the other man too, and went on the stage. She had no influence, she was not pretty, and for years no one heard of her. She has told me, and I believe her, that during those years her life was irreproachable. At last, suddenly, she became famous. And when she came to London the first time, she met a man, a friend of mine. They fell in love with each other. Tremendously. It was like," he went on thoughtfully, forgetful that he was speaking to a child of eighteen, "a race; as if each of them wished to love more than the other. He found out that there was nothing known against her, and—he was a man of higher rank than I—wanted to marry her. Then she told him. Told him of the old days in Sicily. You understand?" He broke off, looking sharply at his hearer who sat quite motionless, listening to him.

"Yes, I understand."

"Well, he didn't marry her, of course. That was all. *H'm!* It's a sad story. I, personally, always respected her for telling him."

Pam rested one elbow on her knee, and her chin in her hand, looked up at him. "Whose was the child?" she asked. "The little girl who died?"

"Oh, that was his, my friend's. I didn't know she had died."

"Yes. And then what happened afterwards, Grandfather?"

"*H'm!* Well, you see, my friend married later. Had to have an heir, of course, and then she, Ravaglia, went to pieces. It was a great pity."

"Yes. It was a great pity. Grandfather, you wrote to ask her to—to go away from me? That time in Aix."

"Yes, my dear, I did. Her reputation was, with perfect justice, outrageous. She was very nice about doing as I asked her."

"Yes. She went away and I never saw her again until the other day in Paris. And now she is dead."

"God rest her soul," he added, after a pause.

Pam stared. "That is what the Catholics say," she commented.

"Yes, but it does not hurt a heathen to say it, too."

It was a perfect morning, and the warm air, full of the sea-tang, was sweet with the scent of growing things. A bee buzzed drowsily among the gilly-flowers: a bird sang in an apple-tree.

For several minutes Lord Yeoland and his granddaughter were both silent, and then, without changing her position the young girl spoke.

"G. F., I want to tell you about Mr. Peele."

"If you wish to, my dear. Otherwise, it is not at all necessary."

"I do wish to. Because you think you understand, but you don't. You see it was this way. When I was at Torpington, he was ill—that is, overworked, and nearly ill, and I used to go to see him at his house. It was silly, but it didn't seem so then, somehow. And he was very good to me, and we had such good times together. Then I went away, to Houlgate, and mother was not well all the summer, and I wrote to him (he had asked me to, of course) and he never answered; and I was angry with him. Mother's illness made me nearly forget all about him, though, and—you know about the wedding. Well," she paused, but did not move, her dark eyes full of the sunlight as she looked steadily at the old man, whose lips were trembling with his sudden overwhelming realisation of her great youth, as she told him her story, all in the past tense

"Well, that evening after the wedding I was lonely, somehow, and I went for a swim to amuse myself. When I came up from the sea, there he was, in our grounds, as if he had fallen from the sky. And we had supper together, and I was very happy, but I didn't know why. Really I didn't

G. F. But when it was time for him to go, then I sud
knew, and so did he. He kissed me. Once."

Again she paused. "He said it was Arcadia. Th
the name of our villa, you know. And he said tha
could not stay. That was because he was engaged
don't know whether I ever told you, Grandfather,"
went on with a change of tone that startled him like
abrupt change of key in a song, "that I don't belie
marriage."

"Yes, you once told me."

"Well, I had told him, too. And Madame Rava
had once said to me something about the man I sho
some day love, and that he would have a right to my pa
as well as to my future. (That was what she meant,
poor dear, what you told me, you know!) Well, in T
pington he had teased me about it, about my 'him,' a
because I said it was a mistake to marry. And then, th
evening after the wedding, he talked about it again. A
when he kissed me, then I knew that we loved each oth
He didn't come the next day, and I forgot all about La
Henny. It seemed to me that—well—I simply didn
think of her at all. But when I dined with them all th
next evening, then I remembered, and I decided not t
see him again."

"And he let you decide?"

"No. He came the next day. I had written him
letter saying good-bye. And he had one for me, als
saying good-bye. We read them together," she addec
with a laugh, "it must have been funny only we didn'
know it."

"And when you had read the letters?"

There was still the glimmer of curious detached amusement in her eyes as she went on. "We went down the hill and spent the day together. We were very sensible, G. F., we knew it must be the last time, but we wanted just that one day."

"Just that one day, Oh Lord!" groaned the old man.

"Yes, and then suddenly, he asked me to marry him. Or rather, he just said that I must. And I said I wouldn't."

"On Henny Shanklin's account."

Pam rose. "No, Grandfather, not altogether. He is not strong, you know, and he works too hard. It seemed to me that I could take care of him, and help him—that he needed me—more than he needed Lady Henny's money and position."

"Pam, I am an old man, and I have seen a good deal of the world. The devil lays no craftier snare than that 'thinking you can help.' That has wrecked more women than—but go on, my dear, go on, my poor child."

"The trouble was that I would not say I'd marry him. I—I do not believe in it, you see."

"I see. Go on."

"And he insisted, and I refused, and then he fainted."

"And you yielded."

"No. I didn't. I kept on refusing, Grandfather; but I said I'd go anywhere with him."

Standing there in her cotton frock, her hands clasped before her, she reminded him irresistibly of the way she had stood under the trees the day she knocked Dick Maxse down; the day he had realised that she had a soul.

"So you said you'd go—anywhere with him!"

"Yes, Grandfather. I love him, you see. And he said no, and that was all. I came away leaving it undecided. Only I hated to hurt him."

"I know. Go on, Pam." He spoke very gently, and Jenkins, catching a glimpse of his face from a window, went and opened a bottle of brandy.

"Well, Madame Ravaglia—I told her about it, too; she seemed to think that I should of course marry him. And then I came to Monks' Yeoland, and there was the wedding, and after it he asked me again. And Grandfather, it does seem awful to promise a lot of things you may not be able to keep, in a church, and it seems to me the very fact of having made the promises makes it impossible to keep them, but I was just going to give in when Lady Henrietta came, and then it seemed *too* awful, and I said no, and sent him away."

"You were not logical, my dear."

"I know it. I have always been so proud of my strong will, Grandfather, and it always seemed to me that I uld always have my own way, but I think that I idn't care so much about my own way as I did—abou s.

“And you again forgot Henrietta?”

“Yes, Grandfather; there was no room for her. Bu hen I heard her voice, I had to remember her; an remembered at the same time, like a flash, all the thin be said *for him* on her side, against me. That she i e Duke's sister, and so rich, and—and all that——”

“And when you sent him to her, he went.”

“Yes. He was very angry: he did not speak to me a ll at the ball, and he went away without saying good-bye e might,” she added with a quick quiver of her lip have said good-bye to me! But he didn't, and—tha all.”

The old man watched her for some minutes in silence. Her absolute unreserve towards him was, he knew, tha f a very reserved nature driven by circumstances and nging for sympathy to tell just once what never coul e repeated again.

He knew that women who confide in many people neve ell the whole of their story, and that Pam would neve ell her's to any one else.

There was something unspeakably touching to him oward the closing of his long life, to see this young creatur ust starting out on her journey, with such a burden.

He himself, looking back on the women he had love ould hardly remember which of two or three he had care or most; he was exuberant, inconstant, light-hearted b ature, as well as by careful cultivation, but he knew tha is grand-daughter was of different metal. The absurdit f one of her desperately faithful stamp objecting t atrimony on the ground that it promised more than i ould fulfil, had not escaped him. He and Charnley Burk ad laughed together over it long ago, but he had, naturally ever taken her prejudice seriously.

When the right man came, he had thought, she woul change her mind quickly enough! And now the righ man had come, was at the same time hopelessly the wron man, she had not changed her mind, but would hav sacrificed her view-point, and—in a week James Poole would be Henrietta Shanklin's husband.

"You think I did right, G. F.?" the girl asked, at last, turning to him.

"Right? Who knows? You did your best, dear, that much is certain," the old man answered, absently.

CHAPTER VIII

Late the next evening Pam said good night to her gran father and prepared to go to her room. She had be reading aloud ever since dinner, for the London po arrived by the afternoon train, and she was tired.

No more had been said about Peele, but she felt relieve by having told the whole story, and knew that she ha pleased the old man by doing so.

Now, as she said good-night, she asked him quietly, h hand in his, "Well, G. F., do you not think, after all, tha I did what was best for him?"

"My dear, I will tell you what I think. I have neve been a very good man; I am what women writers ca a cynical old worldling; I do not believe in anything i particular, and I can face without quailing the great fac that selfishness rules the world. So it is more to th point than if I were a parson, or a saintly old patriarc that I think you did what was—noble and good. An what is more, I haven't a doubt that you will have you reward."

"Grandfather! You mean that I'll go to Heaven?"

"I hope you will, my dear, and indeed I fully expec that you will, but I didn't mean *that*. You did the bes thing you could do, and whatever may happen——"

He stopped hastily, biting his lip, but she only smiled absently. "Nothing can possibly happen, short of Lady Henny at the last minute running away with some one else, as happens in books. And I am not going to fade away like one of Rhoda Broughton's tubercular heroines. I am going to have a very good time, and dance, and flirt like mad (I feel that the Yeoland gift for that art lieth dormant in my young breast), and wear fine clothes, and ride; you will find me a very frivolous and expensive young woman."

"Shall I indeed? Well, just as you like. I feel so much better of late that I am beginning to make plans for a visit to Paris, and possibly even for a winter in Rome. We could take an apartment, and you could try your charms on the Italians."

"Oh, G. F., I *should* love to be in Rome with you! You are an angel to think of it, and it will be perfect. Now good-night. Aren't my brown paws funny with these rings?"

Raveglia's rings had come that afternoon, and she had put them all on.

"I shall *always* wear the ruby, G. F., don't you think I might? She always did."

"George—the man I told you of, gave it to her, my dear. It is very valuable, but wear it if you like, as a souvenir."

"I shall always wear it. Good-night, Grandfather. I am glad you are so well."

He laughed. "Yes, my dear, Cornwall seems to be doing me good."

Pam sat for hours by her open window, turning the ring on her finger and studying, in her curious way, the situation. She had definitely given up Peele; she would never again see him; of these things she was certain. And she did not intend to mope. "In a few months," she thought, "the ache of it will be better. People do get over things, even if they can't forget them." Her lip shook suddenly, but she would not allow herself to cry, and, rising, went to her table and wrote a long letter to Evelyn. Then, her lips still set hard, she undressed and went to bed. Three hours later she was awakened by a loud knocking at her door.

It was Jenkins. "'Is Lordship, Miss, 'e's dying,—I think 'e's gone already," stammered the man. Pam stared stupidly.

"No, no, Jenkins—I am coming—you are mistaken—he was *better*—he *is* better."

But Lord Yeoland had gone. He had died in his sleep. When the doctor had left and the landlord's wife had gone back to her room, Pam and the servant sat by the bed, where, in the cheerful lamplight, the old man lay smiling.

Twice the girl touched his hand gently, hardly believing that she had not been dreaming. But his hand was chill as living hands, however cold, never are.

Pilgrim, whose loud crying had annoyed her mistress, had been sent to her room; and at last Jenkins fell asleep and Pam was alone. Alone to realize her great loneliness. Her father and mother had sailed for Japan in the O'Neill's yacht; the letter had come that afternoon, and Lord Yeoland had said that he was glad, as it made Pam more altogether his.

They were gone, and now he too had gone. She had not cried at all. As yet, though she repeated over and over that he was dead, she could not quite believe it. It required an effort, and she knew that she would not realize it fully for days.

They were to have gone to Rome; they were to have been together. He, of all the people in the world, had needed her, and to be needed is to some natures dearer than being loved, by all but the one.

Hours passed, and dawn came in at the windows; Jenkins awaking with a start, put out the lamp and went to dress.

"You must telegraph to my aunt, Jenkins," Pam said quietly, "and to young Mr. Maxse."

"Yes, Miss, of course. I'll 'ave some tea made for you, Miss. Ah, 'ere is Pilgrim."

Pilgrim, gaunter than ever after her tearful vigil, took the girl to her room and dressed her. "You mustn't take cold, my poor lamb," she said, and Pam, even in her misery, smiled at the unusual tenderness.

Towards noon Mrs. Maxse wired that she could not leave her husband who had taken a sudden turn for the worse, but that Cazalet had started. Ratty, too, was coming.

The morning had been one of brilliant sunshine, but towards evening the wind rose, and it began to rain. Pam wished vaguely that a great storm would come, but it was only what the landlord called 'nasty weather.' All day the young girl sat in the room with the dead man. He had, in his lifetime, hated solitude, and she felt that she could not leave him now.

At six o'clock Cazalet arrived, having driven from the only station to which he could come at that hour.

Pam met him at the door of her grandfather's room. "Oh, Cazzy," she said.

"My dear, it has been dreadful for you, all alone."

"I am always alone," she answered, and then he passed her and stood by the bed looking down on the man who had been his master, and whom he had never in the least understood.

When he turned Pam stood by him, her hands behind her, in the way common to her and to the dead man.

"He was better," she said, "last night; was it last night? And we were making plans about going to Paris and Rome. He died in his sleep. The doctor says it was his heart."

"Then that queer attack at home was from his heart! The doctor made too little of it, as I thought at the time."

She shook her head. "No. That was just a—joke, Cazzy. He was not ill. I wanted to go away, for a change, and so he pretended to be ill, just to—to make his leaving home more natural."

Cazalet turned, surprise written all over his honest face. "He *pretended*? I don't understand."

"Oh, never mind about that. He *was* ill, though he did not know it. And now—oh, *Grandfather!*"

Covering her face with her hands she stood for a moment without speaking, but there were no tears in her eyes.

Christopher Cazalet went sadly to his room, and sending for the landlord, made the necessary arrangements for the next day's journey.

His kind heart ached for the girl, so nearly a child, who had looked at him with such tragedy in her eyes. He was not an unimaginative man, and the pathos of her life had always touched him. Since that day, ten years ago, when she had opened the door of the Villa to him, the monkey in her arms, he had really loved her. She had been, in his dull life, something of the sunshine that she was to his master, and now, finding her alone with the dead man, he realised, as keenly as if she had been of his own blood, the fact of her utter loneliness.

Mr. Maxse was worse; he could not live long, and his wife was engrossed with him; Evelyn had married a man Pam did not like, and who, Cazalet knew, disapproved of her intimacy with his wife; Sacheverel and his wife were utterly selfish, absolutely sufficient to each other; Ratty's wish to marry the girl rendered her living with his mother impossible; and Monk's Yeoland was closed to her for ever.

There was literally no place in the world whither Pam Yeoland could go, as one who belonged there.

His own house was hers, but the old man knew that he could not urge her to come to him. She did not belong there, either. At last, tired of his own thoughts, Cazalet went back to the sitting-room, and found the girl talking in an undertone to Ratty, who very solemn, his hands in his pockets, was staring at her with bulging eyes.

"I want her to go into the garden with me, Cazalet," the young man began, abruptly, as the old man entered, "there's no one about, and the rain has stopped. It's a beastly hole of an hotel; the Bellevue at Treherne is much better, but at least this is empty, and no one will be in the garden."

"I don't want to go into the garden. Please don't bother, Ratty."

"But *look* at her, Cazalet, she looks horribly ill, and a mouthful of fresh air will do her good!"

Pam, looking at him, realized how *very* fat her grandfather would have found him in that suit of clothes, and with difficulty she repressed a smile.

As Cazalet sat down Jenkins came in bringing a lighted lamp, and the old man started as he caught sight of the girl's face. "Good gracious, Pam, you *do* look ill. Have you eaten anything to-day?" he exclaimed.

"Yes, I have eaten, but I have a headache; it is only that, Cazzy."

"But—if I were you I really would go into the garden for a moment. Do go, my dear."

The girl hesitated, but at length rose. "Very well," she said, indifferently, "I'll go, but I'd rather go alone, Ratty, if you don't mind."

The young man was about to protest when Cazalet made him a sign, and he let her leave the room alone.

"Do not trouble her, Mr. Ratty," the steward began, as the door closed, "she is very unhappy; the shock has been great."

"I know. They were awfully fond of each other."

"Yes. And, she—is utterly alone."

Ratty pulled at his young moustache and nodded. "Utterly. Her father and mother—*you* know, Cazalet, and—I suppose my grandfather left her some money, however?" he added.

Cazalet shook his head. "No. He intended doing so; he told me so himself, but he put it off. His will dates from '83."

"I say! That is *rotten!* I mean hard luck. She'll have to go back to her father and mother, won't she, unless——"

"She will go to Monks' Yeoland for the present, I suppose," answered Cazalet, "her father and mother are yachting, she tells me; gone to Japan. She has no address, and has no idea when they will be back."

"Of course she'll come to Monks' Yeoland; until Fred and Minnie Yeoland turn us out." There was a long pause, while Cazalet stared at the table-cloth in deep thought, and Ratty pulled at his moustache.

Then the young man rose and took up his hat. "I'll go and look after her," he said, nervously.

CHAPTER IX

THE rain had entirely ceased, and the moon shone faintly from behind wind-blown clouds. Pam, Caliban in her arms, walked up and down the gravel path, her skirts trailing unheeded. To-morrow they would take him back home, and they would bury him in the old vault in the church he had so rarely visited, and Fred Yeoland, whom she had never seen, would bear his name, and Fred Yeoland's wife, whom her grandfather had once told her was a cat, and who had been unkind to her, would be mistress of the old house, and their children run about the grounds and have tea in the school-room.

The Maxses would go away; Dick was going to die, too, however; Ratty would go back to Oxford and funk his examinations and grow fatter than ever. Evy would have a house in London; Mr. and Mrs. Sacheverel would be very kind to Pam Yeoland, but they would be rather sorry to have her come back, and, any way, they were going to Japan; Madame Ravaglia was dead; Charnley Burke was going back to Australia, if he had not already gone. Every one was provided for. Every one but Pam, and Pilgrim, and Caliban.

Suddenly the moon, which had for a moment been hiding behind a cloud, shone out, shedding its lovely light on Ratty as he came down the path.

"I wish you would not come, Ratty," Pam said, a little pettishly.

"Now, don't you be nasty, young woman. Look here, Pam," he went on, joining her as she turned, and walking by her, "I have just been talking about you with Cazalet."

"Have you?"

"Yes. *Ugh!* I hate that monkey!"

She laughed a little. "That, all things considered, is impolite, Ratty!"

"Well, I do, but never mind that. Cazalet tells me that your father and mother are away yachting somewhere and that you don't know when they will be back."

"Yes. Mr. and Mrs. Sacheverel are going to Japan," she answered, with a queer little smile.

"*H'm!* And, of course, you know that Fred Yeoland will take possession at once. I wired him this morning, and he will of course come to the funeral."

"I know."

"Well—naturally you will go back with us now, and stay until—after the funeral. Minnie Yeoland is a daughter of Lord Verney of Dalgeston." His pause was significant.

"I see. You mean that the daughter of Lord Verney of Dalgeston will not care to acknowledge a cousinship with me. I know that already. Go on."

Ratty broke off a spray of fuchsia and shook them free of rain-drops.

"And—how are you regarding money?" he asked, slowly.

She turned. "Make your mind easy on that score, my good he-cozen (as Pepys says), my grandfather has left me some money."

"You are wrong; he hasn't made a will since '83! Cazalet told me so. He meant to provide for you, and—he put it off until too late. Now don't—don't look like that, Pam, I—I'm sorry I told you so abruptly. I only wanted you to know that after all you wouldn't do so badly by—marrying me." His voice shook with unmistakable feeling as he spoke, but Pam did not answer.

Caliban, who had been asleep, awoke, and turning his face, wizened and weird in the moonlight, to hers, she said gently, "Cally, we shall have to move on. Like Jo in 'Bleak House' you and I and Billy must move on."

"Pam, will you listen to me?" Ratty laid his hand on hers and arrested her, as she started to leave him.

"Pam—you know I love you. I'm a brute to have told you that, but you always laugh at me, and—we'd not be rich, but we'd not starve, and you'd not be lonely. I'll be as good as I can to you, and try to please you."

"Thank you, Ratty, but it is quite impossible."

"Why is it impossible? I'll do my very best to make you happy. And if it's because I'm so fat, why, there's a chap at Christ's who nearly lost two stone in ten days taking some American powders."

Pam burst out laughing—into a genuine laugh of irrepressible amusement. "Oh Ratty Maxse, you are *too* funny," she cried, "with your American powders!"

"Well, I must say you are pretty queer, yelling like a hyena with my grandfather dead in the house," he returned sulkily. "A nice impression you'd make if any one happened to hear you."

"I know I oughtn't to have laughed, but I couldn't help it, and *he* would have laughed, too, Ratty."

"Well, give me my answer. You treat me like a brute, but I love you and I'll try to make you happy," he repeated, frowning.

"I am sorry, Ratty, but I cannot marry you. I thank you, though, and I know you mean to be kind."

Ratty drew himself up to his full height.

"Very well. I shall not trouble you again; indeed, I shall try to avoid seeing you, in the future. And some day, when you see what most men think on certain subjects, you may be sorry." Then he left her.

The girl sat down on a wet bench and watched his majestic withdrawal. Poor Ratty, he was so absurd.

A few minutes later Pilgrim came out, a pair of overshoes in her hand. "You might have more sense," the ancient hand-maiden observed sourly, "than to walk around in this sopping gravel with them slippers on!"

"Pilly, I have no sense. Not a bit. Pilly, how would you like to go back to the Villa?"

"To the Villa! Why should we go there?"

Pilgrim, who was kneeling on the gravel to which she had objected, rose with angular agility.

Pam shrugged her shoulders. "Why should we go anywhere? My grandfather is dead, father and mother don't want us; Aunt Rosamund will go and live with Evy as soon as Uncle Dick has died, and the new Lady Yeoland has already refused to know me. We've only a little money too; only what mother settled on me, or my grandmother's. We might go to America, you know."

"And people don't need money in America, I suppose."

"Don't be sarcastic, Pilly. Sit down here and listen."

"You'll take your death of cold on that bench; come on in, it is late."

"Just a moment. You see, I can't go back to Monks' Yeoland. Poor Ratty is angry with me, and if I'm there, he won't come, and Aunt Rosamund will need him. Then Lady Yeoland would be very angry if I came to the funeral."

"*Why* do you say those things? She might like you now you're a grown up young lady!" Poor Pilgrim's tone was very wistful, and Pam took her hand kindly.

"No, poor old Pilly. I shan't go at all now. We won't go to the funeral, my being grown-up doesn't make any difference. Mrs.—I mean Lady—Yeoland refused to meet me once, when she was visiting at Birdcombe, and I don't care to meet her. My G. F. won't mind; he'll understand. Pilly, you go and pack, and we'll run away again."

Pilly was crying now; crying helplessly and without bitterness at being once more thus cast into outer darkness. Pam was very gentle with her, but quite firm, and hardly an hour later, when the good woman had gone to pack, preparatory to their last flitting from the kind old man who was dead, the young girl, fearful lest Ratty or Cazalet might come to look for her, passed out of the garden, and went down the path to the edge of the rocks.

The wind had died down, and the great waves broke more gently than during the day, but with a sort of sullen dignity. Overhead, the moon now shone in a perfectly clear sky.

Pam's head ached, and she was very tired. It was a relief to her that Pilgrim was prepared, and that before morning they would be again under weigh. She would write to her aunt, of course, and she would leave a note for Cazalet.

Then she would go to America, or back to the Villa.

"I might go on the stage, too," she told herself. "My voice is good, and I could act. If I were not so hideousl young!"

After a minute she rose from the rock on which she had been sitting, and stood looking at the sea.

"Billy and I will go away from *here*. That is the first step to be taken," she said aloud, "and the next needn't be taken until after it. And of one thing I am sure. I am a privateer, as *he* said—but I *will not* be a derelict!"

Full of dreary courage she turned towards the hotel, and at the garden gate met James Peele, as she had met him that night in Arcadia.

"Pam, the Duchess sent me—your grandfather wired her to come, and she couldn't—we didn't even know he was ill——"

"*You*," she said faintly, leaning against the gate.

"Yes. Yesterday, no, the day before, he wired her to come, on very important business, and she could not get away, so she sent me; I swear I tried to get out of it, and couldn't."

"And couldn't." After a pause, she went on, "I see now what he meant."

"What he meant?"

"Yes, I told him about our 'pitiable folly,' in Arcadia. And he said that I was right, and might be rewarded. He was going to tell the Duchess!"

Peele started. "Was he? You think that was why he telegraphed?"

"I know it. He was going to fight for me, my dear old man!"

Her lips shook suddenly, and she bent over Caliban, hiding her face.

"Pam—for God's sake don't cry,"

"No, I'll not cry. Well, I'm glad he did it, for now you will forgive me, won't you?"

"Forgive you!"

"Yes." He took her hand and held it to his heart; he could hear the throbbing under the rough waistcoat. 'It is you who must forgive me, dear."

"Then we both forgive each other, and our consciences are at peace. I must go in now. Mr. C[illegible]alet, the steward, has come, and Ratty, my cousin—will you see them?"

"Yes, no—I don't know."

"Then—good-night. And believe that I hope you will be very happy."

"Without you. Yes; that is very likely. Tell me, what are your plans?"

She told him, in a sudden nervous flow of words; told him that Mrs. Fred Yeoland's presence at the funeral, and Ratty's, ensured her own absence; that her father and mother were gone, that she could not go to Evelyn's, that she was very poor. Then she added, "And so Pilly and Caliban and I are 'off to Philadelphia in the morning!' I am going somewhere, and begin life over again."

"Somewhere! Where?'"

Pam shook her head wearily. "Please don't bother me; I don't know where, and it doesn't matter yet. We are just going away."

Peele's face was very white, and for a moment he bit his lip fiercely. Then, "Pam, listen," his eyes fixed on hers, his hand on her shoulder, he hurried on, "if it is as you say, if you are so utterly alone, and have no place to go—by God, Pam, you must come with me. Come to South Africa with me. You love me, and I love you,—nothing else matters."

She closed her eyes for a moment, while a beautiful blush crept up to her brow.

"To Africa with you! Ah, if I could! But—Lady Henny,——"

"You will come, you will?"

He caught her roughly to him and kissed her. "Pam, you will? It is Fate; we can't help it. I've tried all this time to hold it back, this love, but I can't and neither can you."

"Then, yes."

For a long time they stood together without speaking and then, raising her head, the girl began, her voice vibrating softly, "I wish Grandfather knew. He—always understood."

"In any other case, I am sure, he would not have blamed us, dear. I mean, if you were not his granddaughter."

"He would not blame us as it is, Jim. Of course," she added, resting her cheek against his arm and looking seaward, "he would rather have had us marry, but——"

There was a long pause, during which the rhythmical, hushed breaking of the waves against the rocks seemed to beat back the mounting thoughts in the man's mind.

"You—you will not regret it later, Pam?" he asked, at last. "There is yet time, you know. If you were not so utterly alone—but—I love you."

"And I love you. What a wonderful word it is! It includes everything. I am glad that I have nothing else in the world, for, as it is, *you* give me everything. Even the moonlight and the sound of the ocean seems to come from you."

He drew her closer to him, but could not speak.

After a moment she went on, dreamily, "Jim—if only it would not so hurt her. She is so good, she has not deserved—this. But now it is too late; I cannot give you up. I have been so lonely."

She smiled up at him through the first tears he had ever seen in her eyes, and her lips shook in a tremulous smile.

"I was so afraid you would want me to—marry you, dear!"

Peele frowned, his eyes suddenly hard in the moonlight. "A train leaves at six," he said, drawing away from her.

It annoyed him even in his angry embarrassment to have Caliban's misty eyes staring at him as well as the girl's. "I mean, my dear child, you have refused a dozen times to marry me, you do not believe in marriage. Make that brute stop staring at me, can't you?—I mean that I cannot with decency break my engagement with the Duke of Wight's sister at the eleventh hour, but that I love you, and you love me, and that is—as you have no family ties, I ask you to trust yourself to me, to give your life into my keeping, and I swear before God," he went on eagerly, his voice vibrating, "that you are and always will be, the only woman I have ever loved, and that I will make you as happy as ever man made a woman."

When he paused, out of breath, and biting his lip to control his agitation, there was a long pause.

At the end of the pause, Pam laughed.

"You have made," she said, "a curious mistake!"

"I have made no mistake. You have told me over and over again that you will never marry; if you are afraid, now that the time has come to test your courage——"

She stopped him with a gesture. "What do you know about courage? You, who are trying to run both with the hare and the hounds! I meant that, loving you, I would be proud to come to you, before all the world, to be your wife in everything but the name, you to be my husband in everything but the name. I knew that I could have no friends, that no one would know me, that I should be an outcast, like my mother, but I thought our life should be like that of my father and mother's. And that seemed to me not only beautiful, but good.

"You have offered me a life of shame; of sneaking and hiding, of taking behind her back, the love you would, knowing it to be false, have sworn in a church to give to Henrietta Shanklin. So you see—our ideas differ."

"You are an absurd child," he returned angrily.

"Yes, I am an absurd child! I have been very ridiculous and very wrong; and now I know. I know that people must marry so that their daughters can bear their father's name, and—not be hurt like this."

Her voice broke, and she bent her head to the dark face of the drowsy monkey.

Peele took her hand in his. "Pam, will you forgive me? I—I beg your pardon. You were a fool, perhaps, but I was a scoundrel, and I am ashamed. I will break my engagement and then I will come and ask you to marry me."

She looked up, and saw that his eyes were full of tears.

"No," she said gently, "I forgive you, and I thank you, but I will not marry you."

"Then you do not forgive me."

"Yes; I don't think that, for I do. But I cannot marr you. Good-bye now. I must go in, or Pilgrim will b frightened."

"The other day, in the ruin," he went on hurriedly "you were on the point of saying you would marry me."

"Yes. Because I thought you really needed me, and then she came. Oh, I know I have been illogical and foolish. I must go in now."

"Pam!"

"No."

She gave him her hand for a moment, and then with a little smile, turned away, and went quickly back through the garden.

Seven hours later he stood on the platform of the little station with her, while Pilgrim, grimmer of aspect than ever, bought the tickets.

"I could not go to Monks' Yeoland," the girl explained patiently, "even for the funeral; Ratty is very angry with me, and Mrs. Yeoland would be very angry, too, if I came. And as I am going away, it doesn't matter what other people think. My Grandfather would have understood, or does understand."

"Pam, you love me. How can you do this?"

"It is the only thing I can do. And in a little while, you will see that anything else would indeed have been 'pitiable folly!' What would you be, socially or politically, if you jilted the Duke of Wight's sister four days before the wedding? It would ruin you."

"Then you are going away out of pure philanthropy?" he asked with a sneer.

"No; partly for your sake, partly for her sake, and—a good deal for my own sake."

"I don't understand that."

"I daresay you don't. But you see, I am a pagan philosopher, and I want to be as happy as I can. I should be very unhappy if I married you."

"Yet you loved me!"

The sun was rising, gilding the shabby front of the little station, and sparkling on the dewy grass beyond.

An unshorn porter slouched towards them, Pam's trunk on his shoulder, followed by Pilgrim.

Pam turned and looked at Peele. "I love you," she said quietly, "it's a misfortune, and can't be helped, but it exists. Now, here comes the train."

"I can't let you go."

"Oh yes, you can! Pilly, take my bag, will you? I must wrap Caliban up in my cape, he is shivering. Good-bye, Mr. Peele."

"I shall write to your father," he said, crushing her hand in his.

"So shall I! The dears, how glad I shall be to see them again! And give my love to the Duchess and to Lady Henrietta, and tell her that I hope with all my heart that she will be happy."

The train had stopped, and the guard had opened the door of a first-class empty carriage.

Pilgrim climbed up, with an unconscious display of a lath-like leg, and took the bags from the porter.

"Good-bye, again, then," Pam said, for Peele could not speak, "and God bless you."

As the door closed, she opened the window, and stood by it, looking at him until the train had gone, the monkey's face pressed close to her own.

THE END

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